

This Old House

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AND OUT**

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TO DELIGHT



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BEFORE
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Lots more DIY inspiration

“Time for some housekeeping,” I said, as I eased into a chair at the kitchen table in front of my laptop.

“Terrific,” my wife said, “but how are you going to do that sitting down?”

“I meant some *TOH* housekeeping, in my editor’s letter.”

“Oh, so you’re not cleaning out the basement—again?”

“Uh, no,” I said, afraid to look up from the screen.

I opened a document and briefly detoured from letter writing to begin a list for next weekend:

Clean out basement

Wash off wife’s disappointment

Visit theSnug.com, find DIY peace offering

The Snug, by the way, is a new website the editors of *This Old House* have created. You may be less familiar with it (though we hope that changes!) than with the ongoing spousal disappointment I also create, so let me explain.

If thisoldhouse.com is the complete home-improvement resource, theSnug.com is its plucky younger sibling, full of clever tips and smart solutions and ideas for small-space living. The Snug brings together the best decor and simple DIY projects from *This Old House* online and dozens of other websites around the Internet and presents them with a dose of good humor. It also lets you join the Snug community, so you can use your tablet to create your own blog, where, perhaps, you can offer, um...housekeeping tips. I’d appreciate that.

Speaking of tablets, I’m pleased to say that *TOH* has been recognized by the judges of the Media Industry Newsletter (MIN) as having the best digital edition of any magazine in America. If you haven’t seen *TOH* on tablet, I encourage you to download it—it’s free to subscribers. Design director Hylah Hill and deputy editor Kathryn Keller and their teams work hard to fill it with extras and add interactive features and video. I tend to agree with the MIN judges: It’s pretty amazing.

In other business: The Search for America’s Best Remodel is on! Do you and your project have what it takes to be featured in the pages of *TOH*? You can enter at thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH. Or, if you’ve got a story or other idea, e-mail me and let me know. We love to hear from you, and we take your comments and questions and, yes, even criticisms to heart to try to help make a better *TOH* for you every issue.

Okay, housekeeping over, time to get back to the housekeeping....

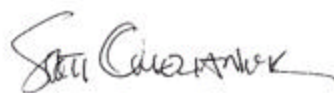


The editor, prepped for housekeeping duty.



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PHOTOS: (LEFT) ERICA GEORGE DINES; (RIGHT) KRISTINE LARSEN

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Reader mail



INSPIRED THINKING? **This Old House** readers have it in abundance. Whether getting, sharing, or adding on to ideas from our pages, you never stop dreaming and creating. And gardeners, take note of the perfect spring reader project shared below.

Baluster boot stand

The January/February 2015 issue came just before Christmas, and when I saw the boot rack in Home Solutions [find it at thisoldhouse.com/apr2015], I knew it would be a perfect gift for each of our grown kids. Fortunately, there's a Habitat for Humanity ReStore nearby, and it had a slew of balusters. I bought all of them and got to work. Thanks for the idea.

—JOHN MONDSCHIEIN, BETHLEHEM, PA.

Perennial resolve

[Re: "Life-Changing Tips for a More Organized Home," January/February 2015] Nice tips! "Get organized" is one of my 2015 New Year's resolutions. Just as it was for 2014...2013...maybe, hmm, back to 1999? Great article!

—CHRIS, VIA THISOLDHOUSE.COM

Color sample boards

In Reader Mail, November/December 2014, a paint pro suggested that rather than painting color swatches on the wall, one can paint on large pieces of paper, to be moved around the room. Here's my version: At my builder's-supply store, I found 2-by-2-foot pieces of drywall, meant for patching damaged walls. They are inexpensive and, being the same material as the wall, stay smooth and flat and show the color in its truest way. Best part? They can be used over and over again. I've had mine for many years.

—KATHI MOON, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

HOW TO REACH THE EDITORS

E-mail TOH_letters@thisoldhouse.com. Please include your full name, address, and phone number. Published letters are edited for clarity and length.

READER
PROJECT
OF THE
MONTH

Concrete planter

JACKIE FEATHER, CARBONDALE, ILL.

I have found many projects in *TOH* to keep my father busy and productive in his retirement. Here's his most recent creation [near right], from the March 2014 Weekend Remodel. It was an anniversary gift for me and my husband, so he personalized it with an *F*, for "Feather." [Find the how-to at thisoldhouse.com/apr2015.]



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Checklist

APRIL 2015

*Easy ways to
improve your home
right now*

6 FAST FIXES

☐ Keep windows working:

In honor of National Window Safety Week (April 5–11), inspect your home's windows to ensure none are painted or nailed shut.



☐ Mix up how you mow:

Changing direction each time you cut the lawn will help grass blades grow upright, not tilted in the direction you mow.

☐ Pull weeds after it rains:

The softer soil makes it easier to remove the entire root.

☐ Get the AC ready to work:

Give the system a whirl now so that you'll have plenty of time to schedule a service call, if needed, before the pros get booked up.

☐ Place sprinklers

strategically: Make sure you're watering your yard, and not your driveway, house, or sidewalk; you'll save water and avoid rotted siding.

☐ Open seldom-used taps:

If guest baths haven't seen company in a month or longer, run faucets and flush toilets to keep traps from drying out and causing unpleasant odors.

☒ Start seeds in shells

Make your breakfast work overtime: Biodegradable, calcium-rich eggshells are perfect for seed starting. Carefully remove the top third of the shell, then wash the inside and poke a drainage hole in the bottom. Fill with seed-starting mix and plant seeds following packet directions. At transplanting time, tap the bottom of the shell on a hard surface to help break it up before placing it in the hole.



☐ Sanitize garden tools

Pruning damaged growth helps new blooms thrive, but dirty tools can spread disease between plants. Keep foliage healthy by cleaning tools of dirt and grime after each use and sanitizing with a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water.



☐ Thwart Thumper

If you see clean cuts on the leaves and stems of your plants, rabbits are likely to blame. These critters love

young shoots, so surround gardens early in the season with 2- to 3-foot-tall chicken-wire fencing, buried about 1 foot deep. Before burying, bend the fence's bottom facing away from plants, to make it harder for rabbits to sneak under.

☐ Maximize the medicine cabinet

Kick off spring cleaning with this oft-neglected space. First, remove everything and use a mild cleanser on shelves. Get rid of any expired prescriptions and over-the-counter meds; visit fda.gov for proper disposal methods. Reserve the lower shelves for regularly used items, and move lesser-used ones to the top. Magnets or hooks on the back of the cabinet door can help corral odds and ends.



PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT) GARY PHOTOS; ANDREW MCCAUL; TETRA IMAGES/CORBIS; SAMUEL MAGLIONE/GETTY IMAGES; DIGITAL/GETTY IMAGES



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Edited by Michelle Brunner

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MORE



Homespun plant stand

Next time you spy an old sewing machine's treadle base at a flea market, think twice before you walk away. These ornate metal supports (\$30 and up on craigslist.org) can be repurposed as charming stands for outdoor containers. Made of durable cast iron, they look great rusted and weathered by the elements. Just mount boards to the brackets of the base with deck screws and set terra-cotta pots or a window box on top. Fill with billowy blooms for a display that will never go out of style.

← A maker's mark in the ironwork gives the piece even more personality.

Clever exterior cleaning hacks

Lackluster windowpanes and icky stains can drag down your curb appeal. Remedy such eyesores with these off-label uses for around-the-house products. —KATELIN HILL



MILDEWED SIDING

↳ *Mr. Clean Magic Eraser*

No hocus-pocus here. The secret to this household

hero is the superfine abrasive texture of the melamine foam, which allows it to easily work mold and mildew spots out of vinyl and wood siding.



DIRTY WINDOWS

↳ *Brillo Sweep and Mop*

This lightweight mop's 360° swiveling head,

self-anchoring sponge, and long reach make it ideal for windows as well as floors.



OILY DRIVEWAY STAINS

↳ *Clay-based kitty litter*

Superabsorbent clay helps soak up oily patches

from asphalt. Spread litter over a fresh spill. Wait a day, then sweep it up and hose down the spot.



RUST ON CONCRETE

↳ *Acid Magic*

The muriatic acid in this cleaner, often sold for swimming pools, lifts rusty stains

from concrete. Wearing gloves and eye protection, dilute 1 part liquid in 4 parts water, then follow the instructions on the label.



Garden fixes from the kitchen

Find nontoxic solutions to your biggest yard woes—for free!—in your pantry. Horticulture expert Melinda Myers shares a few of her top tricks. —KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS

To get rid of weeds

USE: White vinegar

A vinegar spray will burn plants but won't attack the roots, so expect to do repeat applications on weeds that resprout.

To banish mites and aphids

USE: Dishwashing liquid

These tiny pests feed on shrubs, fruits, flowers, and vegetables—basically everything. Mix a few drops of dish soap with water and spray on plants.

To enrich sandy soil

USE: Coffee grounds

The residue from your morning brew will add organic matter and nutrients to sandy soil and increase water capacity. The grounds also improve drainage in clay soil.

To slay slugs

USE: Beer

Pour beer into a shallow dish and sink it into the ground. The slugs will be attracted to the fermenting yeast. "I'd like to believe they die happy," says Myers.

To control powdery mildew

USE: Baking soda

Add 1 tablespoon of baking soda and 1 to 3 teaspoons of horticultural oil to 1 gallon of water. Spray both sides of affected leaves once a week.

To trap earwigs

USE: A paper-towel tube and drinking straws

Fill the cardboard core with large-diameter straws and place it under a plant where you see earwig damage. The earwigs will crawl into the straws. Grab the tube and

cover the ends with your hands. Hold it over a bucket of soapy water and shake the earwigs into the bucket.

To repel wildlife

USE: Cayenne pepper

You can ward off ground squirrels (and moles, gophers, and even deer) by sprinkling a heavy-handed dusting of cayenne pepper directly onto plants you don't want them snacking on.





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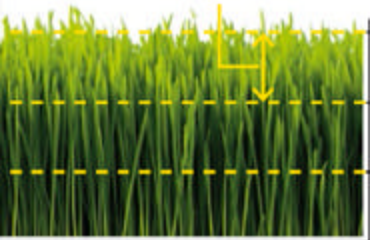
Six lawn-care missteps to nix

A lush carpet of green is easy to attain as long as you avoid a few common mistakes. We spoke with Gerald Henry, PhD, associate professor of environmental turf grass science at the University of Georgia, to find out what *not* to do when caring for a lawn. —PAUL HOPE



1
TRIMMING TURF TOO SHORT “It’s tempting to lop off as much as you can, but make sure to cut off no more than one-third of the blades in a single pass,” says Henry. “Leaving grass longer helps it process light and water and develop a healthy root system,” which in turn leads to a fuller, more attractive lawn.

CUT NO MORE
THAN ONE-THIRD
OF THE HEIGHT



2
FORGETTING TO TEST THE SOIL Most species of grass are quite hearty, but that doesn’t mean they can grow just anywhere. Sending a soil sample to an extension service for testing lets you know exactly what conditions you’re working with. “Turf thrives in soil with a pH of 6.0 to 6.5,” Henry says. Sulfur or lime treatments can alter the pH to create ideal conditions.

3
PLANTING ONE TYPE OF SEED Selecting the right type of turf grass is key, and planting a variety of species and cultivars helps your lawn become established as the seeds’ strengths and weaknesses offset each other. In general, mixtures are more likely to survive adverse weather conditions, like heat and drought, than a single-seed lawn.

4
CUTTING WITH A DULL BLADE If your mower blade isn’t sharp, you’ll end up with torn or bruised shoots, which can turn gray and then brown, leaving the lawn vulnerable to disease and pests. Expect to sharpen your blade about twice per season. If your mower appears to be pulling or trampling the grass rather than cutting, its blades are due for a sharpening. For the step-by-step, go to thisoldhouse.com/apr2015.

5
BAGGING LAWN CLIPPINGS Rather than collect newly shorn grass, use a self-mulching mower to leave shredded cuttings behind. Think of it as free fertilizer. “Anecdotal evidence suggests that returning clippings to your lawn may contribute as much as 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet,” says Henry.

6
WATERING DAILY Lawns need an inch of water a week. Saturate turf all at once and it will run off; deliver too little and it will never reach the roots. Give grass a third of an inch of water three times a week (set out an empty can to collect it, then measure), in the morning.

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Termites, unearthed

The scientific word for these voracious pulp-eaters is *cryptobiotic*. They're so good at hide-and-seek, you may not know they're there—but they are. The most common subterranean variety nests in moist soil in every state save Alaska. While termites may be helpful in the forest, where all that munching dispatches dead stumps, when they move from the yard to your house, they can clean you out. And guess what: Insurance doesn't cover the damage. Here's how to avoid turning your biggest investment into an insect gut job. —DEBORAH BALDWIN

THEY'RE SNEAKY

Termites tiptoe through moist mulch and soil, while winged ones fly during swarming season—which is now. But they nest out of sight. An infestation may not come to light until you renovate or an inspector pokes around.

THEY OVERSHARE

Foraging workers leave the nest in search of food, often scored in a warm, humid place, like a poorly vented crawl space. They then return home to share the ingested goods, using a skill known as “the mutual exchange of gut contents”—gross, but helpful in distributing poison through a colony.

THEY'VE GOT A TASTE FOR...

Foragers are drawn to decaying wood and plants, some kinds more than others, and warmed up if possible—a board under a leaking hot-water pipe, say. They tunnel through the soft springwood, leaving behind the harder grain, making today's softer, fast-grown lumber a real termite treat. FYI: Several colonies can thrive in one house.

THEY EAT NONSTOP

Chomping 24/7, they use moisture, sharp mandibles, and intestinal micro-organisms to turn cellulose in wood, plants, and even paper into food.

THEY LEAVE EVIDENCE

Giveaways include spongy wood and narrow mud tubes, which termites make with saliva and bits of wood or drywall; if you break one open and see workers, you've got a problem. Swarmers shed their wings before burrowing out of sight; if you find shed wings indoors, call in a pro.

THEY HAVE COMPLEX SOCIAL LIVES

An elaborate caste system doles out tasks: foraging; feeding and grooming other termites; shoring up the colony's defenses; and simply multiplying. Once swarmers find juicy terrain and shed their wings, they start procreating to form a subcolony or a new one. It may take years to mature, and then it means trouble.

How to keep them out

► CUT OFF THEIR FOOD

AND WATER Store firewood at least 20 feet from the house. Maintain a 6- to 12-inch line between mulch or soil and wood parts of the house; foliage should be at least 3 feet away. Aim lawn sprinklers away from the foundation, and direct downspouts away from the house.

► TAKE PRECAUTIONS

Don't bring home lumber unless it's been treated to turn off termites—most new boards have. Keep vents clear so dry air can circulate. Air out attics, basements, and crawl spaces regularly.

► GO ON THE DEFENSIVE

Fill or fix any entry points, from torn flashing to cracks in your basement's concrete. Monitor porches, fence posts, and sill plates for signs of termite interest.

► LET DOWN YOUR

GUARD? HIRE A PRO Get three bids, check references, compare battle plans, and read the fine print. Liquid termiticides work by entering the foragers' digestive systems and moving through the colony when food is shared. It's an ugly business, but get real: This is your house, not theirs.

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Pruners for tight spots

Sometimes your regular pruning tools just don't cut it, like when you need to trim a few branches growing against a neighbor's fence, say, or snip a stem without disturbing a nearby bloom. To the rescue: four slim picks that make easy work of cutting in constricted spaces.



1

Mini clippers

Get surgical precision with these 5-inch-long pocket clippers, which are perfect for making intricate cuts, such as snipping soft-stemmed flowers for a bouquet. *Hydrofarm Mini Clippers*, \$5; planetnatural.com

2

Serrated scissors

These garden shears feature an 8-inch-long jagged blade that grips and holds plant stems for a cleaner cut. They're ideal for tougher stems that tend to slide through regular shears. *Fiskars Garden Shears*, \$15; amazon.com

3

Needle-nose pruner

The narrow, slightly curved tip can get into spots where bypass pruners don't quite fit. It's good for clipping dead foliage and thicker perennial stems. *Hydrofarm Curved Blade Pruner*, \$13; planetnatural.com

4

Japanese-style pruning saw

This toothy 10-inch blade is indispensable for pruning shrubs or small tree limbs where loppers don't fit. It cuts on the pull stroke for a cleaner cut with less force. *Garrett Wade large folding pruning saw*, \$20; garrettwade.com



Break a bad laundry habit

Who hasn't let the occasional wet load sit overnight? But if a one-time *oops!* becomes a routine occurrence, you just might be shortening the life span of your washer. Here, three habits to rethink. —M. BRUNNER

YOU OVERLOAD You may believe you're saving time or conserving water by cramming everything into one wash, but overloading taxes the mechanical system of your machine. The telltale sign: loud banging of the drum or tub during the SPIN cycle. Over time, this can fry the belt or burn out the motor. Stick to the load limits recommended in the user's manual.

YOU USE TOO MUCH DETERGENT A liberal pour won't get your clothes any cleaner. In fact, the residue from excess soap makes your threads look dingy, and over-sudsing can cause pump and drain issues, and, in some cases, leaks. Stick to the manufacturer's recommendation for the optimal amount. Note: Washing with soft water requires even less detergent than with hard water.

YOU LET A WET LOAD SIT

It takes only 8 to 12 hours for odors to develop in wet clothes, according to the Whirlpool Institute of Fabric Science. Damp clothes are a breeding ground for mold, fungus, and mildew, which can grow inside the washer and around the rubber door gasket. If you forget to advance a load, wash it again, adding a cup of white vinegar.

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A stylish home office for \$432

A striped accent wall and a one-of-a-kind desk turn a makeshift space into a welcoming work zone



THE PROJECT TALLY

Scored a secondhand desk and hutch, then spruced them up with a new pine desktop extension, blue stain topped with polyurethane, and white paint..... **\$135**

Installed a thrift-store chandelier spray-painted white and embellished with craft-store beads and crystals left over from another fixture..... **\$32**

Added white stripes to the beige window wall with leftover white paint..... **\$0**

Added a new rug, a chair, and sheer curtains..... **\$265**

TOTAL..... \$432

BEFORE The designated office room lacked character—and furniture.

AFTER An L-shaped desk provides plenty of room to spread out, and open shelves lend ample storage and display space. The beaded chandelier, aqua desktop, and subtle wall stripes keep the space from feeling ordinary.

HOME OFFICES HAVE TO WORK HARD: They've got to be efficient and comfortable (but not too comfortable!) and have enough personality to feel like more than just a cubicle. It was a tall order for Sabrina Macchione's empty guest room, which she wanted to convert to a chic office for her burgeoning graphic-design business, in Toronto, Ontario. Looking to create an area with plenty of workspace as well as charm, Sabrina started with a secondhand desk and a hutch with crown molding that gave it the look of a built-in. Although it provided shelf storage, the work surface wasn't very generous, so Sabrina's husband, Mike, and her father-in-law added an extension featuring a geometric leg design. Bright aqua stain turned the desktop into a focal point. Overhead, Mike swapped the plain flush-mount ceiling light for a thrift-shop chandelier that Sabrina painted and embellished with beads and crystals. Striping the window wall gave the workspace a dressy backdrop. Now, Sabrina says, the room is equipped with the tidy storage and expansive surface she needed, adding "It's easy to feel inspired and get creative in a room that's so beautiful." —MEGAN BAKER

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Vintage look, modern function

A contemporary kitchen gets a gut redo—and a turn-back-the-clock style that suits both a 1907 home and a 21st-century family BY AMANDA LECKY + PHOTOGRAPHS BY KAREN MELVIN

➔ **RENOVATING** typically means bringing a kitchen into the now. But in this case, the goal was to go back in time—at least on the surface. “The homeowners loved everything about their 1907 Craftsman home, except for the kitchen,” says Minneapolis-based designer David Heide. In a house full of mahogany woodwork and art glass, the 1980s “update” with a partial drop ceiling and orange walls stuck out like a sore thumb.

As did the oversize peninsula that protruded into the room. Add in a couple of awkwardly placed appliances—including a cooktop set into the peninsula breakfast bar—and the problems multiplied. To open up the space and reintroduce the room to its past, Heide rejiggered the layout and installed red-birch cabinets, open shelving, leaded-art-glass panels, and other Craftsman nods, working with builders Next Level Renovation. “The design integrates state-of-the-art amenities with the timeless spirit of the house,” says Heide. “Just as important, it makes use of every square inch.”

BEFORE Black countertops and lots of can lights made the space feel cold; a big peninsula hemmed in the cook. **AFTER** A compact island provides a gathering place and an uncluttered work surface for meal prep—and mother-daughter baking. Honed-granite counters, red-birch cabinets, and a slate floor evoke a Craftsman look. Outlets hide in the undersides of upper cabinets.



BEFORE





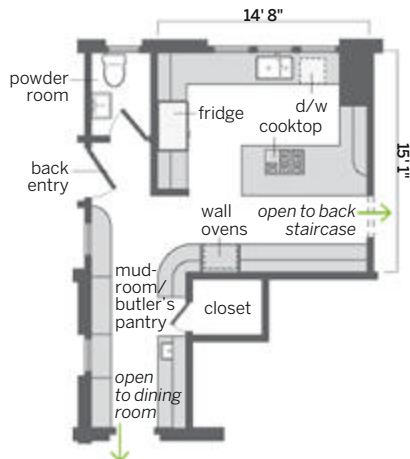
PRODUCED BY COLETTE SCANLON.
STYLING: DAVID ANGER

• **before + after:**
kitchen



before

A large peninsula trapped the cook. Curved cabinets and a partial drop ceiling gave the space a contemporary look.

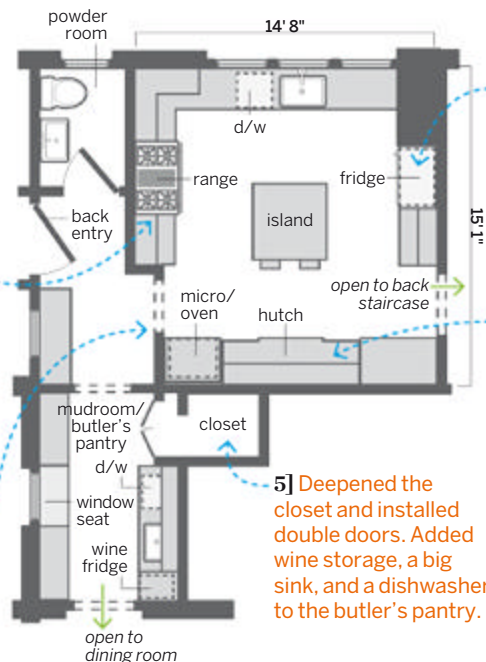


after

An island with seating, burners in a safer spot, and to-the-ceiling storage make the kitchen more functional and inviting.

1] Traded the peninsula-cooktop combo for a range and a freestanding island, creating a new spot for casual meals.

2] Removed curved cabinets and added cased openings to define the kitchen and adjacent spaces.



3] Moved the fridge and dishwasher to triangulate with the island.

4] Maximized storage with a built-in hutch with a ceiling-high row of cupboards, stacked ovens, and a pantry cabinet.

5] Deepened the closet and installed double doors. Added wine storage, a big sink, and a dishwasher to the butler's pantry.

Removing a partial drop ceiling allowed for taller doorways topped with leaded-glass transoms that usher more light through the kitchen. An art-glass window in the mudroom area is on view from the kitchen, too; it looks out onto an enclosed porch.

Handcrafted leaded-glass cabinet door panels show off dishware and reflect light back into the space. *Leaded glass: David Heide Design Studio*



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pro advice DAVID HEIDE, DESIGNER, MINNEAPOLIS

"Stone countertops may be modern but can evoke a period feel. Choose them first. They're like art—you can then pick everything else to complement them."



The built-in clock, a signature of the designer's, adds period flair. The backsplash tile was custom-glazed to match a vein in the granite counters. *Backsplash tile: Revival*

A window seat is tucked between built-in closets in the mudroom area opposite the butler's pantry.

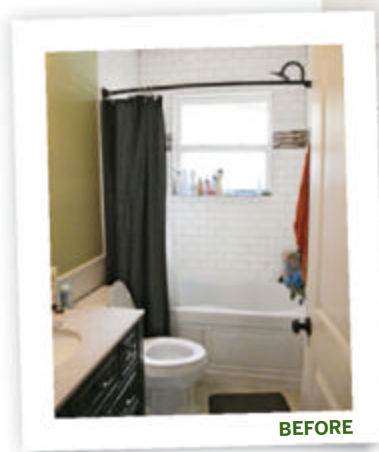


Cutouts in the sink cabinet were inspired by decorative patterns found in houses of this period. *Custom cabinetry: Alpine Woodworking*

Bathtime oasis

A savvy mom helps perfect a spot for her kids that's comfortable, safe, and just plain fun BY DEBORAH BALDWIN + PHOTOGRAPHS BY RYANN FORD

➔ **IF YOU WANT** to design with kids in mind, ask an expert. Former preschool teacher Nadia Blair knew exactly what to put where—and why—when she and her husband, Aaron, added a bath for their boys to their Austin, Texas, house. She put a premium on safety, choosing a low tub, sink faucets that help prevent scalding, tub-shower controls out of kids' reach, and textured floor tile. "The grout is dark because, you know, they're boys," says this very practical mother of Townes, 2, and Hayes, 6 months. Working with CG&S Design-Build during a whole-house redo, Nadia also lobbied for extra space alongside the tub to ease the bathtime routine. "You want to be able to lift a kid out and turn around without bumping into the sink or the toilet," she says. As for finishes, "I wanted the bath to transition with the kids, to be fun and cheerful but not childish." A lively paint scheme was a given, but "later on, if the kids are like, 'Mom, I'm so over turquoise,' we'll just repaint it," she says. Right now, it's just right.



BEFORE

BEFORE The shared hall bath was so narrow that after lifting her toddler out of the high-sided tub, "I had to plunk him down on the toilet," says homeowner Nadia Blair. **AFTER** A second-floor addition gave the kids a bath of their own. Single-lever faucets have to be pushed back to switch to HOT. Bronze finishes and custom window screens reinforce the house's Craftsman style. *Faucets: Delta. Sconces: Savoy House*

Cabinets fronting the tub hide a hamper below a flip-down "drawer" for easy access. Paint: Benjamin Moore's Tropical Teal (cabinets) and Jack Frost (walls), and Kelly-Moore's Beach Glass (ceiling)

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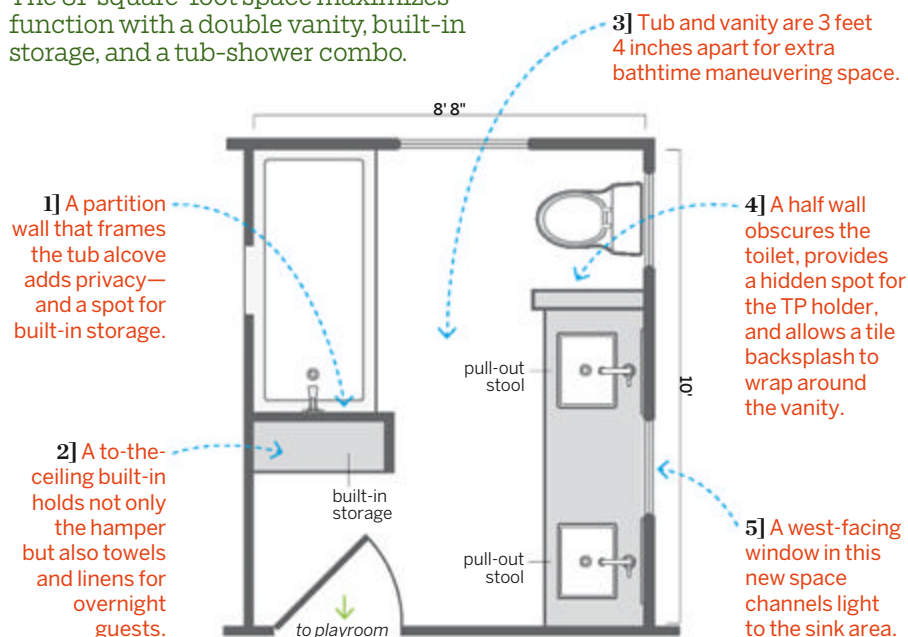
Kickplate pullouts under the sinks serve as step stools. Textured porcelain tile helps prevent slipping. Vanity: Amazonia Cabinetry. Tile: Daltile



Bubble tile adds an effervescent touch. The 14-inch-high tub is easy on parents' backs and safer for stepping in and out. Tile: Porcelanosa. Tub: Kohler

after

The 81-square-foot space maximizes function with a double vanity, built-in storage, and a tub-shower combo.



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Flaunt your woodwork

A dose of strong color can bring out the beauty of even simple moldings

BY DEBORAH BALDWIN + PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN GRUEN



→ **WHITE TRIM** and colored walls may be traditional, but here's a case for flip-flopping the formula. To finish this loft-like living space in an 1861 Brooklyn rowhouse, designer Rafe Churchill trimmed the walls and windows with orange, framing the room as well as the view, and bathed the built-in bookcases with the same hue, bringing out the warm patina of the original heart-pine floor. He chose other forthright colors for the millwork throughout the house, unifying the spaces with walls the ashy white of raw plaster. In this one, the moldings are "simple but also somewhat elegant, and we wanted them to pop," Churchill says. When it comes to trim, he invariably opts for an eggshell finish. "Semigloss can be a distraction," he says, "while eggshell, being a bit more subtle, helps you focus on the details of the woodwork." ■



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FOUR QUESTIONS FOR

Tom Silva

This Old House General Contractor since 1986

Of the many project houses you've worked on in your 29 years at This Old House, which were the most rewarding? The most challenging?

The 2001 Manchester-by-the-Sea house and the Cambridge contemporary we remodeled in 2005 were the most difficult and rewarding. Manchester was in rough shape after years of abuse by the elements and some poor design decisions. We were proud to be able to bring it back to its original grandeur. The house in Cambridge was just a small box hidden in overgrown brush when we started, and we transformed it into a gorgeous modern home. You would never have recognized it as the same house!

What's your best advice to homeowners working with contractors?

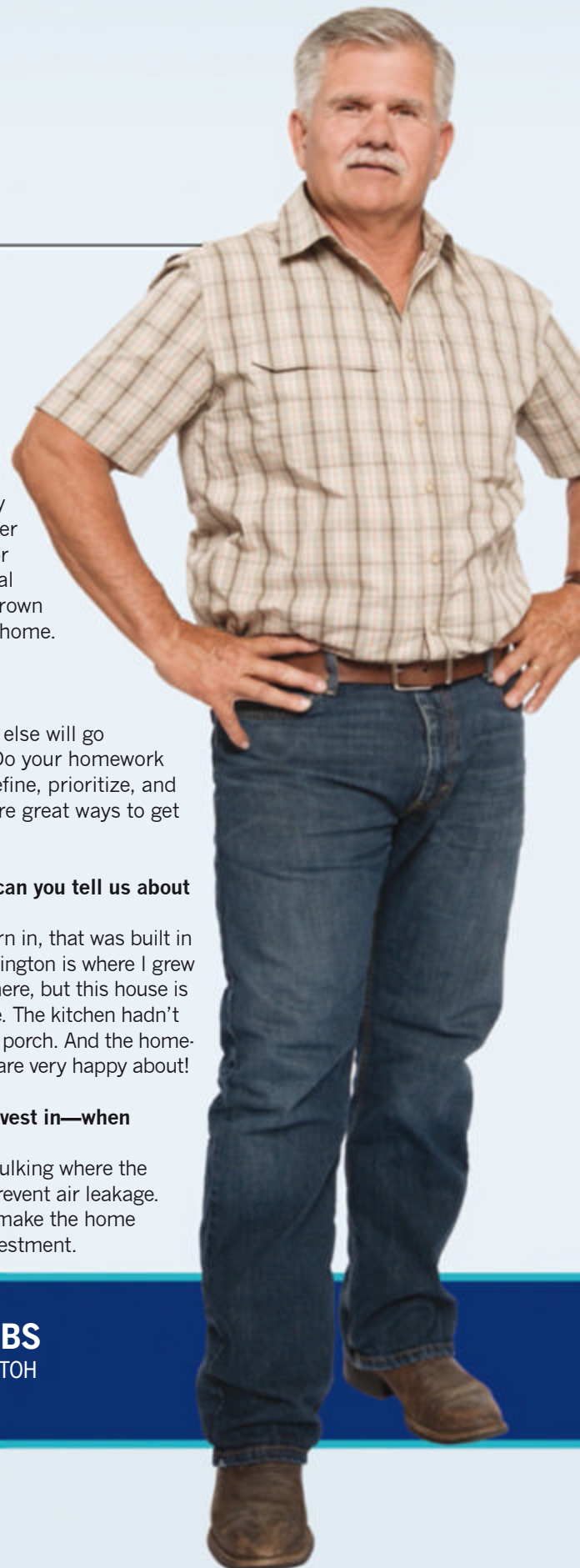
If you have a good working relationship with your contractor, everything else will go smoothly. So take the time to find a builder you feel comfortable with. Do your homework by asking friends, family, and neighbors for recommendations. Then, define, prioritize, and communicate your ideas clearly. Magazine cutouts and digital photos are great ways to get everyone on the same page.

You have a personal connection to the town of Lexington, Mass. What can you tell us about that, and about the current TOH project there?

I was born and raised in Lexington, in the same house my mother was born in, that was built in 1765. That house is just a stone's throw away from our project house. Lexington is where I grew up, and where I learned and developed my craft. There's so much history here, but this house is actually a Colonial Revival from 1966—our youngest project house to date. The kitchen hadn't been touched in 40 years. We are working on a big deck and a screened-in porch. And the homeowners' three children are all going to get their own bedroom, which they are very happy about!

Name three projects that remodelers frequently overlook—or fail to invest in—when embarking on a remodel.

(1) High-efficiency heating and cooling. (2) High-quality insulation. (3) Caulking where the foundation meets the house, and around all the windows and doors, to prevent air leakage. Behind-the-walls projects like these may not be glamorous, but they will make the home more efficient, economical, and durable. They are definitely worth the investment.



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Moravian star pendants

These multifaceted fixtures add some dazzle overhead

BY MEGAN BAKER + PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW McCAUL

→ **THEY SEEM TOO** handsome for something that started out in a geometry lesson, but that's where these stars are said to have first taken shape: at a 19th-century Moravian church school in Germany, where math students pieced together paper pyramids to create multipoint polyhedra. By the end of the century, an alumnus of the school began selling the paper stars in his shop, and they soon became popular as Christmas decorations. Those evolved into more permanent glass-and-metal lanterns.

Decades later, the star-shaped lights have become a cottage classic, frequently hung on porch ceilings and inside or outside entryways. More sought after than ever, the form can now be found as flush-mount ceiling fixtures, semi-flush-mounts, and even as sconces. But it's hard to beat the 3-D beauty of the classic pendant. Here, 10 of our favorites, all sure to leave you starry-eyed.

1 > see-through

WORLDS AWAY

Size: 20"W x 20"H;

36-inch chain

Highlights: Clear glass keeps this large 18-point version with a rust finish from feeling heavy. \$373; zincdoor.com

2 > vintage patina

POTTERY BARN

Size: 13"W x 19"H;

72-inch chain

Highlights: Seeded glass softens the look of the bulb—and the light it emits. The 16-point frame's oil-rubbed-bronze finish adds a timeworn look. \$149; potterybarn.com





3

3> pierced metal

QUINTANA ROO

Size: 14"W × 14"H;
96-inch cord (chain
not included)

Highlights: In punched tin
with an antiqued-copper
finish, this decorative
18-pointer gives off an
atmospheric glow. \$89;
quintanarousoa.com



4

4> pearly white

MEYDA TIFFANY

Size: 9"W × 12"H;
37-inch chain

Highlights: Black metal
sets off this 12-pointer's
opalescent glass, which
looks equally pretty when
the light is turned off.
\$194; wayfair.com



5

5> stained glass

MEYDA TIFFANY

Size: 9"W × 12"H;
37-inch chain

Highlights: Rich colors
are tempered by panes
of wavy translucent glass
and a dark oil-rubbed-
bronze frame, recalling
decorative windows of old.
\$194; wayfair.com



6

6> amber glow

LA FUENTE IMPORTS

Size: 16"W × 17"H;
36-inch chain

Highlights: Orange-tinted
panes and a brass-finished
frame give off a warmth
that fits right in with honey-
and amber-colored wood
floors and millwork. \$289;
lafuente.com



7> seeded style

WORTH HOME PRODUCTS

Size: 10"W x 12"H;

48-inch cord

Highlights: Fitted with an adapter to convert a can light, this small 12-point star would look good hung in multiples. \$169; homedepot.com

8> antique look

SHADES OF LIGHT

Size: 19"W x 19"H;

36-inch chain

Highlights: Panes flecked with gold conjure the look of vintage mirrors on this 18-pointer in an aged-gold finish. \$295; shadesoflight.com

9> frosted glass

WORLDS AWAY

Size: 12"W x 12"H;

36-inch chain

Highlights: Translucent white glass diffuses the light for a subdued glow that recalls the Moravian star's paper origins. \$213; zincdoor.com

10> gem tones

LA FUENTE IMPORTS

Size: 14"W x 15"H;

36-inch chain

Highlights: Whimsical, brightly colored glass is perfect to wake up minimalist, white-walled surroundings. \$279; lafuente.com ■

Elegant farmhouse living room

Rustic finds and colorful furnishings set against an airy white backdrop give this space enduring charm BY KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS + PHOTOGRAPH BY HELEN NORMAN

→ **THE PALE NEUTRALS** and weathered woods at the heart of farmhouse style are naturally low-key, but they can still be sophisticated. Take this living room, which designer P. Allen Smith put together on a shoestring for his Arkansas guesthouse. The artful bouquet of heirloom tools above the worn mantel creates a central focal point for symmetrically placed armchairs and wood-framed mirrors. Pillows and plant pots in candy-apple red pop against white walls, which Smith covered with painted burlap to look like pricey grasscloth and wainscoted with salvaged cabinet doors. Want an equally unfussy look at your place? Read on.



suzani-print chair

The medallions on this slipcover are echoed in the oval mirrors, providing welcome curves in a room filled with rectilinear shapes. Rocker, \$998; grandinroad.com

blue throw

A wrap in a country-skies hue is a quick (and cozy) strategy for adding color. \$58; wayfair.com



PHOTOS: (THROW, CACHEPOT, MIRROR, BASKET, COFFEE TABLE, PILLOWS, TOOLS) ANDREW MCCAUL





crimson cachepot

Mini galvanized flower buckets painted a rich red and filled with greenery add life to a mantel. \$16; amazon.com



pine mirror

A pair of mirrors framed in reclaimed wood draws the eye up, helping highlight the open-beam ceiling. \$180; shop.pallen.smith.com



egg basket

This genuine farm-supply staple makes a vivid receptacle for down-home decor, like Smith's balls of yarn. \$14; enasco.com



zinc-topped coffee table

We painted the wood base of this hard-wearing metal-top coffee table a creamy white, then distressed it with a scraper and dark finishing wax to give it the same lived-in feel as Smith's find. \$270; overstock.com



pillow covers

In easy-to-wash cotton and at an easy-to-manage price, these covers add a welcome hit of bold red. \$4 each; ikea.com



tool-themed artwork

Inspired by saber displays he saw on the walls of British manor houses, Smith affixed his ancestors' rusty farm tools with wood screws driven into the studs and secured them with baling wire and an old leather belt. We found this assortment on Etsy, from \$6 to \$24 each. ■

DIY



Bridging the gap

As a young Colonial gets additional space, it also receives a face-lift that feels both contemporary and true to its roots

BY PAUL HOPE + PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TIEULI

➔ **IT MIGHT SOUND FUNNY** to worry about the architectural integrity of a house that's younger than the entire Baby Boomer generation, but for homeowners Jody and Jeremy Kieval, preserving the overall identity of their 1966 Garrison Colonial, the project house on this season of *This Old House* TV, was important. "We saw the renovation as an opportunity to improve the curb appeal while staying true to the Colonial style," says Jody.

When the couple bought the home, in the Boston suburb of Lexington, Massachusetts, back in 2011, they knew they'd need to expand in order to create separate bedrooms for their three girls. Adding on above the attached two-car garage seemed like the logical—and economical—way to do that. They signed up principal architect Bill Hubner of Incite Architecture, in Lexington, to design it. "Rather than trying to make this addition look like an extension of the main house, or even like it was built at the same time, we focused on making sure elements looked like they belonged together visually," Hubner says.

Following that strategy, Hubner designed a contemporary asymmetrical front-gabled roof over the garage addition, but, in a nod to the home's style, flanked it with a shed dormer, a common feature of early Colonials. A side-gabled roof over the mudroom on the first floor mirrors the house's roofline and connects the addition to the main house.

The changes to the other half of the facade make the house even more Colonial than it was originally. *TOH* TV general contractor Tom Silva and his crew built a farmer's porch, mean-



THE KIEVAL FAMILY

A WELCOMING HOME

ABOVE: The Garrison Colonial, in Lexington, Massachusetts, was remodeled for the current season of *TOH* TV to add space for the family of five (INSET). A modified roofline and low-slung porch better incorporate the secondary entry and two-car garage, which had looked like afterthoughts (BEFORE).



BEFORE

WATCH THE MAGIC HAPPEN

Tune in to your local PBS station to catch the latest episode of TOH TV. To stream any episode that has aired, go to thisoldhouse.com/watchTOH. Up next month in this space: See the fully finished interior of the Lexington project house.

**COME ON IN**

The inviting new porch sets the tone for the renovation, while a new bluestone walk leads the way from the sidewalk.

ing one that occupies a single story and spans the width of the house. It conceals the Garrison Colonial's telltale cantilever, where the second story overhung the first, but it also creates an inviting gathering space. The Doric columns further reinforce the Colonial style, as do divided-light windows, simple louvered shutters, and clapboard siding.

With the facade fixed up, the yard needed attention too. A towering cluster of gnarled pines in front shaded a large swath of roof, creating an ideal breeding ground for moss—and rot. “And when you’ve got a tight grouping of trees like that, they prevent other plants from growing,” says *TOH* landscape contractor Roger Cook, who removed the trees.

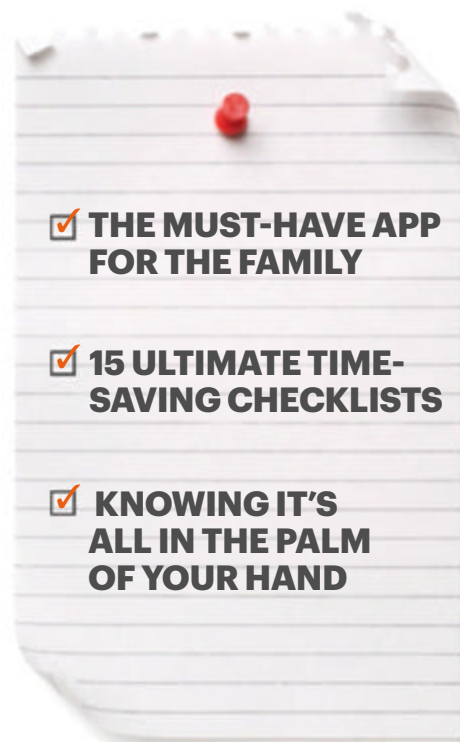
In their place, the Kievals chose a variety of ornamental shrubs, including hydrangeas and a privacy hedge of inkberry (*Ilex glabra*); Kousa dogwood trees will fill the yard with beautiful white blossoms in spring.

The finishing touch is a new bluestone walkway, with pavers set in a classic running-bond pattern, that connects the porch to the street. Visitors no longer have to walk up the driveway. As for the Kievals, they couldn't be more pleased. “We moved to Lexington because it's such a tight-knit community, the kind of place where you can have a spontaneous gathering of friends and neighbors,” says Jody. “We finally feel like our house is inviting enough that people will want to stop by!” ■

CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY

Simple Doric columns evoke early Colonial Revivals, but the porch floor forgoes the classic painted look; the floorboards, milled from ipe, a Brazilian hardwood, can be left untreated.





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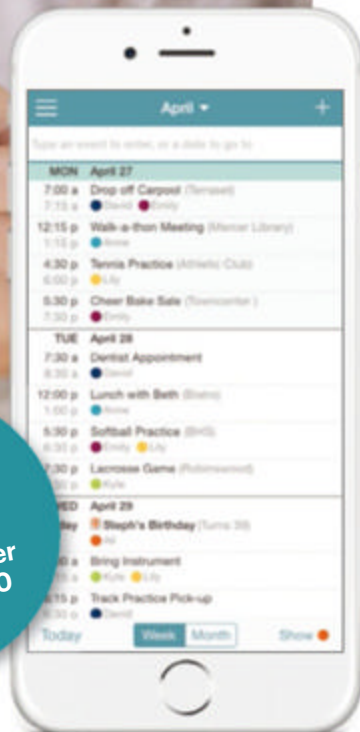
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Family life. Simplified. **COZI**

Little trees, big rewards

Thanks to an ingenious pruning method, you can grow a fruitful orchard in even a small backyard BY ANN RALPH

➔ **LUSCIOUS, SUN-RIPENED PEACHES...**crisp, juicy apples...sweet, velvety-fleshed pears. The allure of homegrown fruit leads many of us to plant a tree or two. Problem is, just a few years later, we find we've bitten off more than we can chew with large, challenging-to-prune trees that produce substantial quantities of fruit. One 'Santa Rosa' plum tree, for example, stands 15 feet tall and wide and produces about 700 pieces of fruit, much of it too high to reach without a ladder, over just a few weeks; same with peach, pear, and apple trees. That's fine if you're a commercial grower, but not if you just want a few fresh-picked plums.

Luckily there's a simple, innovative way to keep fruit trees at people-height, with all the harvest within arm's reach. By relying on a very specific pruning schedule, this method also allows you to grow more kinds of fruit over a longer harvest season in a small area. That same plum tree, pruned in this way, would stand 8 feet tall and 4 feet wide when mature, could be pruned from ground level in about 15 minutes, and might yield 100 full-size fruits by the third year—enough for a small family, with some to share. For all the how-to details, turn the page.

HAVE A LOVELY YARD?



Show us the transformation for a chance to win our America's Best Remodel contest and appear in our October issue. Scan this page with the Blippar app or go to thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH



Kept small with timed pruning, this 'Fuji' apple tree stands about 4 feet high and wide and produces an ample crop of full-size fruits.

get started

BUYING> Begin with a bare-root sapling, available at nurseries and by mail order from late winter into spring (about \$30 each, depending on the variety). Fruit trees are sold according to their mature size: standard (or full size), semidwarf, or dwarf, depending on variety. Most fruit trees are grafted; a branch of one tree is grown on the rootstock of another, creating a new plant with the best attributes of both. So why not just buy a semidwarf or dwarf tree rather than craft one? Semidwarf rootstocks can grow as tall as 25 feet; dwarf rootstocks stay small (8 to 10 feet tall) but often

have weak roots. Instead of selecting trees based on their mature height, choose ones that excel in your climate, and keep them small with pruning. Consult a local nursery or cooperative extension office for proven varieties.

SITING> If selected carefully, planted to get at least a half day of full sun, and mulched well, fruit trees will thrive in most soils. If your soil is rocky, lacks nutrients, or has a lot of clay, you can plant in a raised bed or a 20-inch-wide container instead.

SPACING> A typical summer-pruned fruit tree can grow to be about 5 feet wide. In an 8-by-8-foot area, you can plant two trees on the diagonal, 3 feet apart on center (A). Another option (B) is a hedgerow made of any types of trees spaced 3 feet apart on center. Get even more variety with “high-density planting” (C). Here, several of the same type of fruit tree with a similar rootstock—such as a grouping of early, midseason, and late peaches—are planted in a single hole, spaced 18 inches apart on center. In all cases, pruning and competition for water and food limits size.



A



B



C

pruning schedule

Late winter is an ideal time to prune for structure and aesthetics, but not for controlling height: Branches grow vigorously in spring. To keep your tree small and sturdy, prune in June, around the summer solstice. By removing leafy growth then, your tree is put on a diet of sorts; fewer leaves means less photosynthesis, which decreases the amount of food made by the plant. Reducing available nutrients and energy, along with summer pruning, helps your tree stay short.



STEP 1: FIRST SPRING

If your tree doesn't already have branches below the initial heading cut (see “First Pruning,” opposite), use your fingers to remove all but three evenly spaced buds. These will become the tree's scaffold branches.



STEP 2: FIRST SUMMER

Remove suckers—growth that emerges from the rootstock—and prune away all but the three branches evenly spaced around the trunk. Head back these branches by one-half to two-thirds, to an outward-facing bud.

make the cut

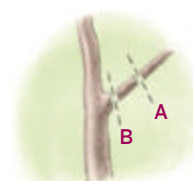
Fruit trees require two types of pruning cuts: heading and thinning.



heading cut

Used to shorten branches and limbs. Make a clean cut just above a leaf node or where a leaf is attached

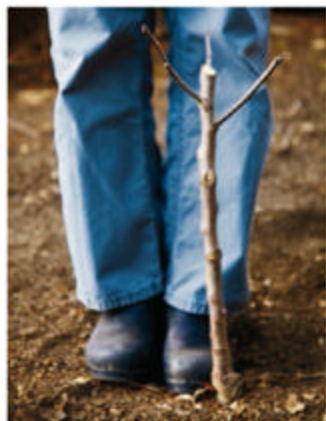
to a stem. This type of cut forces the buds below to grow into new branches, increasing bushiness. If you've sheared a hedge, you've seen the resulting bushy growth of heading cuts.



thinning cut

Removes an entire branch or shoot in two steps. The first cut (A) shortens the branch to

a stub and avoids ripping the bark. The second cut (B) removes the rest of the limb; cut back to just above the branch collar, the thickened area of bark from which a limb emerges. Thinning cuts decrease the number of branches and open the interior of the tree to light and air. Light is crucial for the formation of fruiting spurs, the twiglets that blossom and ultimately bear fruit.



first pruning

After planting, make a heading cut at an angle just above a leaf node so that the whip now stands knee-high or no taller than 18 inches from the ground. While lopping off the top two-thirds of your new sapling seems lunatic, do it anyway—the structure of your tree depends on it. This initial cut creates a sturdy, low-branching scaffold, the major supporting limbs of the tree. Where you cut becomes the crotch of the tree, and the trunk will grow no taller. This heading cut and the pruning that follows creates branches strong enough to support the weight of ripening produce.

what to grow

There are backyard fruit favorites, such as peaches, apples, and pears, that can be successfully cultivated across the country. Maximize your harvest by choosing trees that fruit in succession over the growing season.



Pears Most need the pollen of a second variety on the same fruiting schedule for fertilization. Here, three seasonal combinations:

EARLY (late July through mid-August)

Warren (Zones 5–7): medium size; pale green; juicy, buttery flesh.

Conference (Zones 4–9): medium size; pale green; very juicy, sweet.

MIDSEASON (late August through early September)

Seckel (Zones 5–8): small size; reddish-brown skin; creamy white.

Potomac (Zones 5–8): medium size; pale-green skin; white flesh.

LATE (mid-September through early October)

Anjou (Zones 5–8): large size; bright green; firm, sweet, fine-textured.

Bosc (Zones 5–9): medium size; brownish skin; tender, spicy-sweet.



Peaches These will grow in Zones 4–9 but do especially well in Zones 6 and 7. Most are able to set fruit with their own pollen.

EARLY (June through mid-July)

Fourth of July (Zones 5–8): medium size; very early; red skin; firm.

MIDSEASON (late July through mid-August)

Fay Elberta (Zones 5–9): medium size; yellow skin; classic rich flavor.

LATE (late August through late September)

Hale Haven (Zones 5–8): medium size; blush skin; firm, sweet, juicy.



Apples Most produce a better yield when pollinated by a second variety. Here are three seasonal combinations:

EARLY (late July through late August)

Gala (Zones 4–10): large size; red-striped skin; crisp, sweet-tart.

Akane (Zones 5–9): medium size; pale-red skin; sweet, spicy flesh.

MIDSEASON (late August through late September)

Granny Smith (Zones 6–9): large; yellow-green skin; firm, crisp, tart.

Jonagold (Zones 5–8): large size; red-striped fruit; firm, juicy.

LATE (late September through late October)

Stayman Winesap (Zones 5–8): large; deep-red skin; wine-spicy.

Fuji (Zones 5–8): medium size; deep-orange skin; crisp, sweet.

For more information, check out a copy of *Grow a Little Fruit Tree*, by Ann Ralph (Storey Publishing, 2015).



STEP 3: FIRST WINTER

Prune to open up the center of the tree and remove crossing or crowded limbs. These cuts encourage a vase-like shape. To spur growth of thinner limbs, head back by two-thirds; to slow growth of thicker limbs, head back by one-half.



STEP 4: SECOND SUMMER

You'll have a small, shapely tree that still has growing to do. Head back vertical branches by one-half to two-thirds. These cuts reduce height and encourage branches to grow at a 45° angle, horizontal enough to create fruit.



STEP 5: EVER AFTER

In winter, prune to refine the tree's shape and maintain its form. The final size now depends solely on summer pruning: Thin crowded branches and head back growth that exceeds your reach. Fruit on the tree? Prune anyway!



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Bland, begone

A handsome porch with front-facing steps gives this retro cottage a welcoming new look BY KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS + ILLUSTRATION BY DRAWGATE INC.



BEFORE

➔ **“PLEASE HELP!** Our house feels dated,” says Lori Sears Beer of the lackluster 1932 Minimal Traditional she shares with her husband, Robert, in Cincinnati. For ideas, we turned to area architect Matthew Evans.

His first suggestion: a new columned porch, with front-facing steps. “Entering a home from the side makes it feel like the house is towering over you,” Evans says. “It should be inviting.” To give the facade’s look more heft, he extended the roof overhangs and added soffit trim. Varying finishes—such as shake shingles, clapboard siding, and stone cladding—provide dimension and texture. A colorful palette of yellows with muted red accents gives the house a warm, friendly look. The flared stone-veneer chimney suggests that there’s a large fireplace inside.

Lori’s reaction? “Wow—it’s amazing. We especially love that welcoming new porch.”

WANT A PHOTOSHOP REDO?

Send snapshots to
redo@thisoldhouse.com



↑
Stone veneer is a relatively simple way to add charm to a raised concrete foundation.

finishing touches

A few thoughtfully chosen details add up to a big difference in curb appeal.



window

An eye-catching oval shape gives an architectural surprise to the structure’s simple facade. Pella; from \$1,350



house numbers

Sand-cast copper digits are distressed enough to look like they’ve been around awhile. House of Antique Hardware; \$24 each



sconce

Bronze-finished wall lights cast a wide, warm glow on either side of the entry door. Lowe’s; \$45



column

Square posts made from low-maintenance PVC are both hardwearing and handsome. Turncraft; from \$324

Cubby shelf

Whether it's handmade or ready-made, this wall-mount catchall helps keep a busy entryway neat and tidy

BY THOMAS BAKER + PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID PRINCE

→ NOT LUCKY ENOUGH to have an entryway with a closet or a guy named Jeeves waiting for you when you get home? Then you know how quickly the front hall disappears under heaps of jackets, backpacks, and hats, and how frustrating it is to have to hunt for what you need before heading out. But with a wall-mount organizer standing ready to corral your stuff, you just might get the kids to school on time.

A simple cubby shelf like the one at right, with nooks above for loose items and hooks below for hanging things, makes a tempting DIY project. It uses only eight pieces of wood and needs no fancy joinery—everything is held together with screws and glue.

If you'd rather have someone else build one for you, you'll find plenty of ready-made options at a variety of prices available online. Some are in a plain Shaker style, like the one shown here; others are more dressed up, replete with crown molding, hand-forged hooks, or beadboard backs.

Plain or fancy, your cubby shelf will prove every bit as helpful as that Jeeves fellow.

Similar to shown: Monterey entryway shelf by Prepac, \$118; wayfair.com

SHARE YOUR DIY PROJECT



Upload pictures of something you built for a chance to appear in October's reader-created issue. Scan this page with the Blippar app or go to thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH



build it
or buy it

BUILD IT

Poplar is a good wood for this project because it's inexpensive, readily available, and takes paint beautifully

COST \$93

TIME 4 hours

DIFFICULTY Easy. Except for the end pieces, all cuts are straight and square.

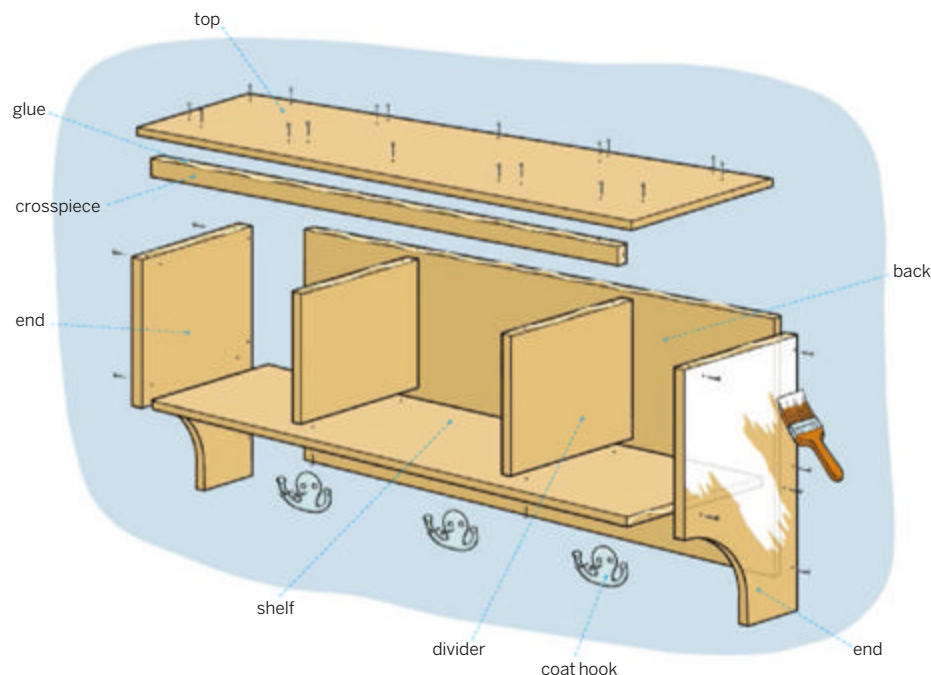
clamped together, cut along the arc with a jigsaw; unclamp, then sand the curves smooth.

3] Create the cubbies. Divide the shelf into three equal segments along its length. Using a rafter square, mark each segment with a line on one face and edge. Clamp a divider piece against the shelf's unmarked face, flush with the marked edge and centered on the mark. Use the rafter square to square the divider front to back. Then, using a combination countersink bit, drill two pilot holes through the dividing line and into the divider. Glue and screw the pieces together. Do the same with the other divider.

4] Attach the back and ends. With the cubby assembly facedown, line up the edges of the back piece with the tops of both dividers and the ends of the shelf. Square the dividers with a rafter square hooked to the back's top edge, and drill pilot holes through the back and into the dividers and the shelf. Glue and screw the back in place. Align the end pieces flush with the back's top edge and capture its side edges. Glue and screw the ends to the shelf and back.

5] Attach the top. Position the top with a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch overhang at the ends and front (flush with the back). Glue and screw the top to the ends, dividers, and back. Glue and screw the crosspiece to the end pieces and to the underside of the top, snug against the dividers.

6] Finish and mount. Cover the screwheads with wood filler. When it dries, sand, prime, and paint the entire piece. Mount the coat hooks so that they are evenly spaced below the shelf, then hang it on the wall, within easy reach, using countersunk 3-inch deck screws driven through the back and into the studs. Hide the screwheads with plugs.



BUY IT

It's MDF versus solid wood in the price game

\$99

the basic model

You assemble the 38-inch-wide Wellman Wall Shelf from a kit made of MDF and wood veneers. homedecorators.com



\$150

the mid-range model

Made of stained pine, this 3-foot-wide cubby shelf features wood pegs and a beadboard back. sawdustcityllc.com



\$225

the luxury model

This one-of-a-kind 38-inch-wide piece is built from reclaimed barnwood and sports hand-forged iron hooks. strongoakswoodshop.com





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EVENT SPOTLIGHT

2015 International Builders' Show

Las Vegas | January 20-22

The 2015 NAHB International Builders' Show attracted more than 55,000 attendees over the course of three days in Las Vegas. TOH Master Carpenter Norm Abram and General Contractor Tom Silva were on hand at this year's show, greeting fans, signing autographs, and answering a variety of home improvement questions.



Tom and Norm sign autographs at the **Lumber Liquidators** booth.



Tom greets fans at the **AZEK/TimberTech** booth.



Norm and Tom stop by for a chat with Mark and Theresa, hosts of the **MyFixItUpLife** home improvement radio show.

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shelvesthatslide.com



Edge a garden bed with brick

Use clay pavers to form a tidy border to separate your lawn from plantings

BY PAUL HOPE + PHOTOGRAPHS BY KOLIN SMITH

→ AN ARTFULLY ARRANGED

band of bricks handsomely defines the boundary between grass and garden. And if you install the bricks flush with the ground, they also serve as a handy mowing guide: You can run the wheels of a push mower right on top of the edging and pretty much dispense with the string trimmer. Some people set the pavers in concrete, but there's no need if you make a proper dry bed. That means digging down past the loamy topsoil to prevent frost heave from disrupting the bricks come winter; once you do, laying a bed of compacted paver base and stone dust gives the bricks a solid foundation and provides drainage while preventing weeds or roots from coming up. Follow along as *This Old House* senior technical editor Mark Powers guides you through the installation of this functional yard accent.

Bricks: Portsmouth #1 Severe Weather Rated Paver Bricks, 93 cents each; congdonlumber.com

COST \$185

TIME Two days to set 30 feet

DIFFICULTY Easy. Just know that cutting bricks is very dusty business.



DAY-TO-DAY TIMELINE

SATURDAY Form the trench (Steps 1–3).

SUNDAY Set the bricks (Steps 4–5).

TOOLS

rope
masking tape to mark the rope
measuring tape
masonry pencil
circular saw with a segmented diamond blade
nail
water bottle
tarp
spade
tamper
wheelbarrow
trowel
rubber mallet
masonry brush or paintbrush
garden hose with nozzle

MATERIALS

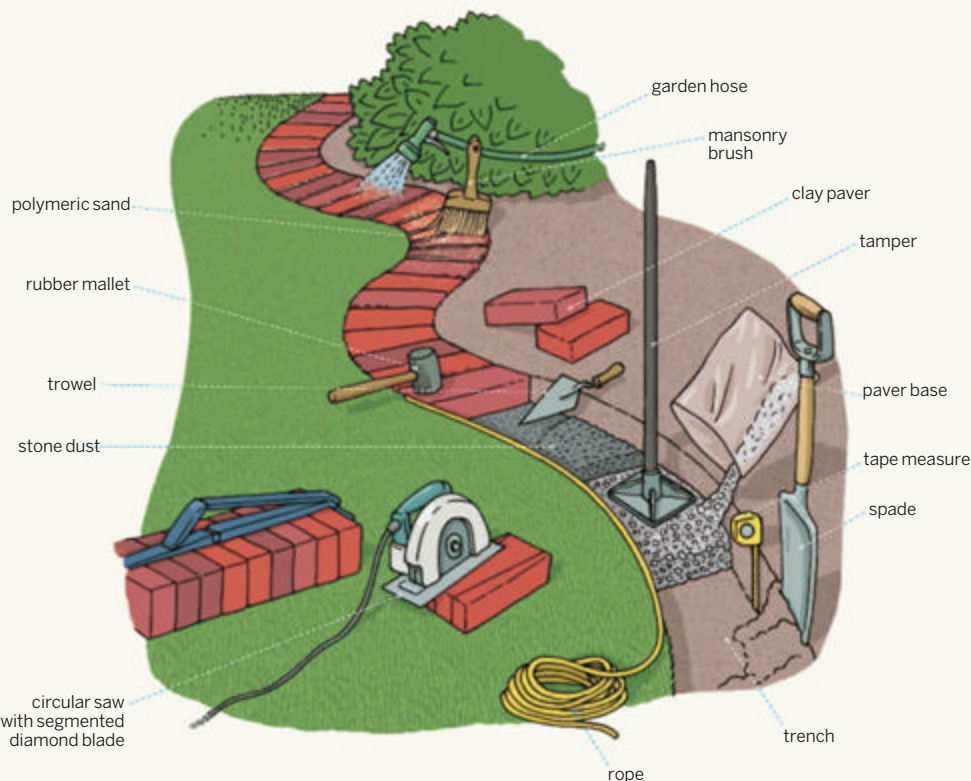
clay pavers (severe-weather-rated bricks) Get enough to line your bed, plus 10 percent.

paver base Get enough to build a 2- to 3-inch base. (A standard 0.5-cubic-foot bag covers 6 square feet at a 1-inch depth.)

stone dust Get enough to lay a 1-inch layer. (A standard 0.5-cubic-foot bag covers 6 square feet at a 1-inch depth.)

type 1 portland cement Get a 94-pound bag.

polymeric sand A 40-pound tub just covered our edging.



1 MAP OUT THE EDGING

A] Order the bricks. Lay a length of rope along the edge of your garden bed, following its contours. Mark the rope at the end of the bed with tape, pull it taut, and measure the rope up to the mark. Divide that length in inches by the width of the bricks to calculate the number you'll need, then add 10 percent to your order. For example: $324 \text{ inches} \div 4 \text{ inches (brick width)} = 81 \text{ bricks} + 10 \text{ percent} = 89 \text{ bricks}$. Make sure to buy clay pavers, sometimes called severe-weather-rated bricks.

B] Scout the curves. Line the edge of the bed with bricks, tight against the grass line—close to one another but not quite touching, leaving a gap for the sand. To work around soft curves, fan them out slightly; for tight curves, find the center or peak of the curve and leave a triangular gap, as shown. The widest point of the gap should be no wider than a brick.

2 MAKE THE KEYSTONES

A] Mark the bricks. You'll make angled keystone bricks to fill the triangular gaps in the curves. Center a brick over a gap, and use the masonry pencil to mark its end where it overlaps its neighboring bricks, as shown. Mark the opposite end of the brick in the same way.

B] Transfer the marks. Flip the brick over, and transfer the marks from each end onto its face. Use the masonry pencil, and a straightedge if necessary, to draw lines connecting the marks at each end of the brick to form your cutlines.

C] Cut the keystones. With the brick marked, rest it on a work surface with the cutlines faceup. Fit the circular saw with the segmented diamond blade. Adjust the depth of the blade so that it will just barely cut through the brick in a single pass. To minimize dust, trickle water onto the brick as you cut; use the nail to puncture the bottom of the water bottle to create a steady trickle. Set the cut keystone brick into the opening to make sure it fits.



SEE HOW IT'S DONE

To watch a video of this project, scan this page with the Blippar app or go to thisoldhouse.com/apr2015



3 FORM THE TRENCH

A] Dig the trench. Place the tarp over your grass to collect soil as you dig. Using the spade, dig a trench with straight sides along the length of the bed, working from the grass line into the bed. Make the trench several inches wider than the length of your bricks.

B] Check the depth. Dig until the soil changes color, indicating that you've gotten past the topsoil. Measure the depth of your trench, as shown; it should be at least 6 inches deep to allow for a 2- to 3-inch layer of paver base, 1 inch of stone dust, and the bricks set flush with the ground.

4 SET THE EDGING

A] Pack the paver base. Spread the paver base evenly throughout the trench, stopping periodically to pack it down with the tamper, as shown. Continue to add the material in small batches until it forms a base that's at least 2 to 3 inches deep. If you had to dig deeper than 6 inches to reach past the topsoil, continue to add and pack the paver base until the depth of the tamped trench is equal to the thickness of a brick, plus 1 inch for the stone dust.

B] Mix the stone dust. In a large wheelbarrow, mix together stone dust and portland cement in a 6:1 ratio, using six shovelfuls of stone dust for every shovelful of cement.

Use the garden hose to mist (but don't soak) the mixture to activate the cement and make it easier to mix and shovel into the trench.

C] Lay the bricks. Working in stretches several feet long, use the trowel to cover the paver base with the stone-dust mixture. Press the bricks into place one at a time, tapping them down with the rubber mallet. Make the face of each brick flush with the ground on either side of the trench and with the brick preceding it. Continue, brick by brick, and set the cut keystones at curves, maintaining a consistent gap. Use any leftover stone dust to backfill along the back edge of the bricks, then cover it with soil.



A



B



C

SHARE YOUR DIY PROJECT



Upload pictures of something you built for a chance to appear in October's reader-created issue. Scan this page with the Blippar app or go to thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH



A



B

5 FINISH THE EDGING

A] Fill the gaps. With the bricks set, pour polymeric sand over them and use the brush to sweep it into the spaces between them, as shown. Working your way down the bed, whack the bricks with the rubber mallet to force the sand to pack itself tight. Continue to fill the gaps until the sand is flush with the faces of the bricks and won't settle any farther.

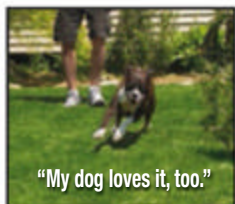
B] Hose off the edging. Brush away any excess polymeric sand or dust; either one can stain the bricks if it gets damp. With the hose, wash the edging with a gentle spray, dampening the sand between the bricks without dislodging it. As the sand absorbs water, it will set, acting like grout to lock the bricks in place for years to come. 🏠

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— E. Nims, CT

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THE COTTAGE OUT BACK

**A NEGLECTED FREESTANDING
GARAGE GOES FROM STORING JUNK
TO SPOILING GUESTS**

BY DEBORAH BALDWIN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KELLER + KELLER
STYLING BY MARY MOORE

Cedar shingles cured by the salt air, window brackets borrowed from the 1880s main house, a sunny balcony, and a shady elm give the former garage a storybook look. The entry lights and cast-iron front step are salvaged finds. *Paint: Benjamin Moore's Garden Oasis (trim)*



A FABULOUS HOUSE IN A FABULOUS

location can be a mixed blessing. On the one hand, you know exactly where you'll be spending your spare time. On the other, so do a lot of your friends and relatives.

Faced with just this situation, Marilyn and Brian Thompson, owners of a home just steps from the water on Cape Cod, in Massachusetts, cast a fresh eye on a dilapidated garage hovering behind their Victorian-era house. While previously it had screamed "teardown," it now sang "potential guest suite."

The garage, they learned, had come with a significant perk. Built around 1960, it was grandfathered under tough setback requirements that had gone into effect since. "Tearing it down would have been legal," Marilyn explains, "but building a new structure, on this size lot, would not." In order to destroy it, you might say, they had to save it.

"It was a dreadful sight," says Marilyn,



Scaled-down vintage furnishings, collected over time, give the open first floor a lived-in feel.

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recalling the first time she ventured inside. Though it had a classic garage door, it hadn't held cars for a while. Instead, a bath and an unfinished room took up the first floor, spiked by stairs to a dusty attic crash pad. The previous owner had rented out the space in summer while using part of the first floor to dump stuff he might need someday...for something.

Granted, a makeover would require work, but the new owners were already steeling themselves for a redo of the house, a wonderful old clapboard confection that needed, among other things, a new foundation. Marilyn had assembled a team for the big job: preservation-minded architect John Kuhn, seasoned general contractor Tom Hague III, and interior designer Tina Lalonde. Why not tackle the garage too?

Creating a hideaway with cunning details like a salvaged iron doorstep proved as compelling as building out the big house, and the former garage was soon prepped for the full

English-cottage treatment, from cedar shingles to overflowing window boxes.

But first, some bodywork. The garage was sitting on a slab but suffering from the same drainage issues as the house, complete with soggy sill plates and siding. "The walls were leaning out; there was no real foundation on it," says a laconic Hague.

When Marilyn suggested picking the thing up, moving it back a few feet, and rebuilding it board by board, Hague was agreeable. It helped, she says, that once the garage door was gone, "you could have lifted it with two fingers."

Well, almost. First, Hague's crew sliced through the sill plates to loosen the house from its concrete slab, as if opening an oyster. "We braced it well—diagonal 2x6s, inside and outside—and put it on rollers," says Hague. Did he mention that, after all this, he stripped the sad structure to its studs?

Before sliding the skeleton back in place, the crew dug a hole in a slightly different spot

and poured concrete for a basement. “Then we built a floor and reinforced it with a steel beam,” Hague says, “and rolled the frame back in place.”

The team had varying notions about how to turn the remains of the garage into a cottage worthy of Hansel and Gretel’s Cape Cod cousins. Along with a traditional facade, Kuhn favored an open living space and stairs against one wall. Marilyn pictured a balcony off the bedroom, at the gable end facing the house, where guests could lean over and sneak a peek inside to see about lunch.

Hague quietly opposed the idea of placing support columns under the balcony, as originally planned, plotting instead to cantilever it off steel flitch plates embedded in the second floor. As lifelong scavengers who think nothing of pulling off the road to pick up an abandoned cabinet, Marilyn and Lalonde had already scared up vintage support brackets for the balcony. Hague gamely reinforced them with steel inserts and up they went,

BELOW: The kitchenette is warmed up by painted beadboard, salvaged brackets—some turned upside down—a bridge faucet, and an Oriental rug. *Paint: Benjamin Moore’s Caldwell Green (cabinets) and Northampton Putty (walls)*



FLOOR PLANS

The former garage came with a bath downstairs and an attic. The first floor was opened up, and a dormered bedroom was added upstairs, along with a half bath. The 676-square-foot guest cottage now has a balcony that overlooks the main house and a basement (not shown) for ping-pong and storage.





shades of green. Neatly trimmed built-ins and lots of beadboard and crown molding give the little cottage a layered, grown-up look. Lalonde wove in salvaged finds and finished the kitchenette cottage-style. “We didn’t want the cabinets to be too nice,” Marilyn says of their desire for a been-there, can’t-remember-how-long effect.

She furnished the rest of the guest suite with gathered-over-time finds like a deep armchair culled from the family’s former place nearby.

“The cottage has its own front patio and a little stone wall, and you can sit out there,” Marilyn says. But often she prefers to curl up inside this cozy getaway all on her own, after the summer season subsides. “I take a glass of wine and sit over there in the big chair,” she says. “And I think, *This is about all I really need—just this little house.*” ■

LEFT: In the main bath, beadboard and a salvaged sink reinforce the cottage spirit. **BELOW:** The staircase was also layered with color and texture, including ornate window trim, a salvaged newel post, and paint and stain. *Paint: Benjamin Moore’s Mohegan Sage (floor and stair treads) and Tate Olive (balusters)*

along with a railing of square and flatsawn balusters pierced with breezy cutouts.

Equal attention was paid to the front of the cottage, which faces a side street from a self-effacing distance. “We put the shed dormer over the front door, which is flanked by two windows, so it’s got a simple, symmetrical shape. It works nicely with the existing house,” Kuhn says. The smart little facade boasts two types of shingles, diamond and straight-sided, “which breaks down the scale and carries your eye to where they meet,” Kuhn says. Windows were matched to the house’s but painted soft green, bowing to the main structure’s more formal white while melting a bit into the foliage.

Hague says the hardest part inside was engineering the stairs, partly because the 256-square-foot second floor had to accommodate a stair landing, a door to the balcony, and Marilyn’s thoughtful request for a half bath. To fit the pieces together just so, while also meeting code, Kuhn designed a windowed stairwell with steps that descend and wind around to stop short of the front door. Hague built it with three types of wood, and Lalonde finished it in two



The upstairs bedroom pulls in air and light through a gable-end window and an adjacent dormer; tucked in one corner is a tiny half bath. *Paint: Benjamin Moore's Misted Green (walls), Carolina Gull (trim and beams), Gray Cashmere (beadboard), and Rushing River (floor)*





A

LOCATE THE
PHOTOS ON
THE GARDEN
PLAN, PAGE 68.

DESIGNED TO DELIGHT

HOW ONE LANDSCAPE PRO TURNED HIS HARDCRABBLE
SURROUNDINGS INTO A LUSH, ROMANTIC GARDEN WITH LITTLE
SURPRISES AROUND EVERY CORNER



*by Tovah Martin * photographs by Matthew Benson*

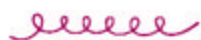


OPPOSITE: A lattice-clad pergola off the driveway supports tumbling vines (A) and leads the way to a secret shade garden. THIS PAGE: The small patio outside the master suite offers a spot to enjoy morning coffee while serenaded by doves housed in one of two outdoor aviaries (B).

IT TAKES

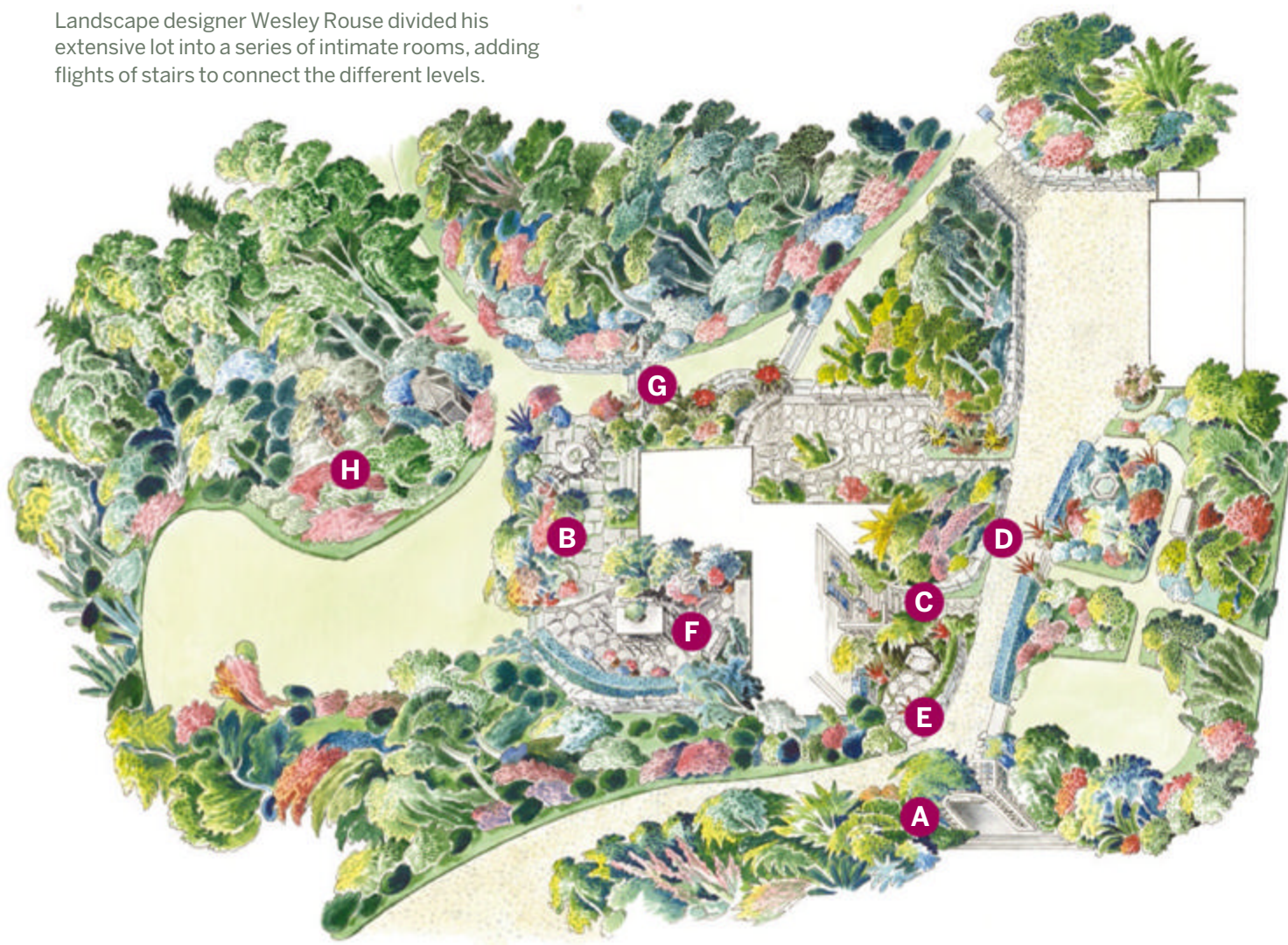
It takes a deep well of imagination—and no small amount of optimism—to look at scrubby overgrown meadows rubbing up against a cramped 1850s horse barn turned house and envision what unfolds there today: a series of dreamy outdoor rooms and secret gardens, hidden by hedges and connected by winding paths. Happily, landscape designer Wesley Rouse, who calls this acreage in western Connecticut home, is just that kind of visionary. After more than 40 years of continuous planting, plotting, and pruning, he now has the garden that first took shape in his mind's eye, one that serves his practical needs and also captivates the senses.

Even before he moved back to his native state after buying the property, Rouse had an ambitious agenda for the landscape and a wish list longer than



THE PLAN

Landscape designer Wesley Rouse divided his extensive lot into a series of intimate rooms, adding flights of stairs to connect the different levels.



LEFT: Rouse extended the side-door stoop and raised the elevation by a couple of feet to create a generous outdoor vestibule backed with hedges. Peering out the door, he sees a leafy wall of plants instead of the runway a typical walkway can create (C). **RIGHT:** There are many secret gardens on the property; this one has a curving path that beckons visitors from the driveway to a shady area. The entrance is marked by pots filled with spiky New Zealand flax, fuchsia, sweet alyssum, and coleus, all annuals in this Zone 6 garden (D).



a country mile. He wanted cozy spaces for lounging and dining, fresh herbs for clipping just outside the kitchen, the seductive sounds of tinkling fountains, and everything that's needed to lure the wild birds he loves—all in a setting that would screen out nearby neighbors and road noise. Like most avid gardeners, Rouse's inclination on day one was to grab a shovel and dig in. But he wisely resisted the urge, taking the long view, budgeting his money, studying the space, and setting priorities for the property. "It's a good idea to allow some time to figure out traffic patterns and be sure of what you need for the way you live," he says. "Living with your space will also allow you to become familiar with the light patterns throughout the year so you can consider when you want to be in the sun and when you don't."

The first order of business was the messy, hard stuff no one much likes to do: clearing, culling, and cutting overgrown plants in order to create much-needed structure. The landscape had been left untended for years and was overrun with enthusiastic but unwelcome plants, such as multiflora roses, maple saplings, and assorted "botanical thugs." Clearing expanses of unwanted plants took a few seasons. Resisting the urge to bulldoze the place

LEFT: Ringed with stone walls, this room off the home office shows how effective elevation changes can be. "Simply sinking a room by a few feet makes it more interesting," says Rouse (E).

clean, Rouse maneuvered carefully around mature trees that had promise. Although they required reshaping, these stands of white pine, Norway spruce, and hemlock proved invaluable in absorbing the sounds of road traffic and creating a privacy screen from neighbors just a stone's throw from his property lines. He padded these existing trees with a new layer of shrubs and more trees, including flowering dogwoods, Japanese hollies, and fruiting crabapples, that add color and texture even as they help to further muffle noise. "Rather than build fences," says Rouse, "I install hedges."

Once the rough outlines for the landscape were in place, it was time for the fun part: making the actual gardens. A much-sought-after designer, Rouse turned the tables on himself and used the same process for planning his landscape that he uses when working with clients. "When I first meet clients, I suggest they list their favorite outdoor activities, and then I find ways for the landscape to accommodate their needs." In his own case, this meant spaces to satisfy his passion for outdoor entertaining and bird-watching. While he renovated the house, adding bedrooms, bathrooms, a living room, and a screened porch, he made certain that every door leading outside was given a corresponding garden entry.

As always, there were scale and traffic-flow considerations to get right. "You want privacy, but you also need to make outdoor rooms big enough to serve their function comfortably. There's a tendency to make such spaces too small," says Rouse. To avoid that common error, he left room for





FAR LEFT: Potted tropicals, such as begonia and fuchsia, come out of the greenhouse when the weather warms and are woven into the tumble of partial-shade-loving perennials, boosting seasonal color. "I use every color except orange and orange-red," says Rouse of his garden beds. "Red and purple merge with blues, yellows, and whites just fine." **LEFT:** Rouse, with his golden retriever, Bonnie Lass, relaxes on a metal bench cleverly painted gray to fade into the foliage (F).



FAR LEFT: *Lush* doesn't begin to describe the larger terrace behind the house, where the controlled chaos of dozens of varieties of plants is contained by walls of sheared shrubs. The cast-stone fountain sits across from the screened porch, creating a focal point. **LEFT:** The soft carpet of lady's mantle, moss, and maidenhair ferns is encouraged to self-sow promiscuously between irregular fieldstone pavers. The cast-iron dining table and chairs set the scene for dinner under the stars (F).

"hallways" between destinations. Natural-stone retaining walls shoulder the hillside gracefully, and the stone staircases—constructed of New England granite and Connecticut fieldstone—facilitate gradual, subtle changes in grade, connecting the multiple levels of the landscape. Nestled beside all the stairs are shrub plantings, with containers sited thoughtfully to alert visitors to transitions.

The flowing design of the garden moves meanderers comfortably from space to space but also invites lingering. The backyard dining spaces see the most action. The larger of the two is conveniently positioned off the back door of the house's screened-in porch. Paved with irregular-shaped fieldstone, this patio is enclosed by graduated tiers of boxwood shrubs, with garlands of ivy scrambling up the trees and spring- and summer-flowering vines such as honeysuckle around the porch. It's a feast for the senses, complete with an ornate dining set that suggests Victorian-era cast iron, a small bench in a similar style tucked into a corner, fragrant flowers, and a trickling fountain. This is where Rouse can be found on most warm summer evenings. Mornings are spent in the small walled space off the master bedroom. Edged with an herb garden, this room boasts a second, smaller seating area and leads via a blueberry-lined hedge to one of the two outdoor aviaries.

It is in these outdoor rooms that you see the subtle hand of a designer at work. Of the many ideas begging to be borrowed from this expansive garden, two are especially notable. First, throughout all the spaces up near the

house, Rouse planted shrubs, such as boxwood, rhododendron, daphne, holly, mock orange, and cherry laurel, instead of flowering perennials because, as he explains, “green stabilizes the eye and creates a backdrop for color.” Against this soothing tapestry he added large, lavishly planted containers to provide a scale shift, bringing the eye down from all the surrounding tall shrubbery. In spring, those pots host pansies, snapdragons, twinspur, nemesia, African daisy, verbena, monkey flower, bachelor’s buttons, and other annuals in a mix of hues. Later in the season, when the weather stabilizes, he swaps in begonias and other tropical plants as accents. “I used hedges to create the borders, then added informality and lushness within with flowering plants, groundcovers, and moss, always with an eye toward mixing textures and colors,” Rouse says.

Farther away from the house, the garden spaces transition from cozy rooms to more-untamed areas, such as the verdant shade gardens where Rouse planted woodland groundcovers between planters and added Mongolian minstrel sculptures to inhabit the forest-floor scene. Across the driveway, another series of intimate rooms radiate out from a central path and meander into spaces hidden by copses of shrubbery. Here he planted thick stands of sturdy, dependable shrubs, including redvein enkianthus, Korean lilac, bluebeard, and butterfly bush, chosen for their all-season performance.



LEFT: Made of New England granite, these stairs lead wanderers from the dining areas to the shade gardens. Planters filled with a compelling combination of agave, heuchera, and ferns sit atop stone walls. The house, once white, is now a soft blue-gray, to blend with the gardens (G). **ABOVE:** Rouse tucks small stone and concrete statues here and there to create charming, unexpected focal points. In the shade gardens west of the house, a band of Mongolian musicians makes itself at home (H).



EASY-CARE SHRUBS

To see Wesley Rouse’s picks for top-performing shrubs, scan this page with the Blippar app or go to thisoldhouse.com/apr2015

**G**

One path transitions through an archway, a simple pergola that Rouse made extraordinary by cladding it with lattice cut into arches to create a scaffolding for a sumptuous collection of clematis, double-dwarf wisteria, and male variegated kiwi vines.

While the outdoor spaces feel private, they also offer views. Having a lawn was never high up on Rouse's wish list, but, like many homeowners, he had a septic field to incorporate. That necessity provided his one excuse to put in a modest lawn surrounded by screening shrubs, including false cypress, pines, and magnolias. Taking care not to insert woody plants with particularly thirsty, water-seeking roots that might compromise the septic system (such as willows and some maples), he enjoys all the advantages of a green screen with none of the pitfalls.

The resulting landscape is pretty much heaven, not only a sanctuary for the landscape designer and his partner but also one that nurtures wildlife, especially those longed-for winged visitors. By thoughtfully incorporating the shelter, water, and food that draw wild birds close, Rouse encourages these feathered friends come in droves and stay. Everyone has his own definition of paradise, of course. "For me," he says, "heaven is going outside for a meal and being serenaded by birdsong from the bushes nearby." ■

ABOVE: An outdoor aviary that shelters a pair of doves can be spied from the master bedroom. To keep from blocking the view of the aviary and the densely planted perennial borders that surround the lawn, Rouse chose low urns filled with a frothy mix of blue fescue and pink New Guinea impatiens (G).

How the Pros Cut Costs (Not Corners)

38 insider tips for a better-looking, better-functioning home





Professional designers, contractors, and tradesmen aren't so different from the rest of us: They appreciate saving a buck too, whether they're working on their own homes or have budget-minded clients to please. So we asked veteran remodeling pros to unpack their tool kits of resources, shortcuts, smart advice, and clever tricks for upgrading a space without breaking the bank. Here, their insider secrets

By **Josh Garskof**
Illustrations by **Adam McCauley**

In the kitchen

1. Check out lower-grade granite slabs when shopping for countertops. Fall in love with a top-tier stone? Often there's one that's nearly identical at a lower price. You may find essentially the same look that a high-priced Group D slab has in Group C for \$2,000 to \$3,000 less. "There's nothing inferior about the quality of a lower-grade stone," says Karen Richmond, a kitchen designer in Portland, Oregon. "It's probably just from a quarry in South Dakota instead of Brazil."

2. Skip pricey LED under-cabinet light fixtures if they require running new wiring. Instead, go for LED adhesive tape lights and save up to \$500, including labor. Available at home centers, these peel-and-stick flexible LED circuit-board

strips come in various levels of brightness and can be cut to length. Best of all, they plug into any outlet, such as one for a wall-mount microwave or an over-the-range vent hood. "Add a plug-in radio-frequency remote-control unit, and there's no switch wiring needed," says contractor Dean Bennett, of Castle Rock, Colorado. To try: Armacost Lighting 12 foot LED Warm White Tape Light, \$70; homedepot.com

3. Before sinking big bucks into a kitchen remodel, factor in how long you'll live in the house. Pricey upgrades like stone countertops make sense even if you expect to move in just a few years, because the quality is easy for buyers to see, says Susan Serra, a kitchen designer in Huntington, New York. But consider passing

on custom cabinets unless you're staying put for at least 10 years. "Stock cabinets could save you \$20,000 over custom," says Serra, "and many buyers probably won't fully appreciate the difference."

4. Hire an e-design firm for professional help without the fancy fees. Working with a designer is likely to result in a better-planned project—and a better return on your investment. At homepolish.com or Google Helpouts, you can contract with a kitchen designer or an interior decorator for \$50 to \$200 an hour; you might need only a few hours of her time. Look for one who is certified by ASID or NKBA and whose portfolio you really like.

5. Consider open shelving instead of standard upper cabinets. Sleek and floating, supported by painted wood brackets, or made from salvaged planks, they offer storage space that can amp up your kitchen's style. Depending on materials used, you could easily save half the price of installing cabinets with doors.

6. Use pricey tile sparingly to get a custom-backsplash look for less. Run a single course of premium stone or glass tile horizontally, two-thirds of the way up from the bottom of the backsplash, filling in with lesser-priced field tile. Fifty square feet of glass tile, installed, can cost \$3,000; use a fraction of that and save a bundle.

7. Work in some furniture to boost your storage capacity. Rather than choosing a built-in pantry cabinet, hit an antiques store for a freestanding unit. "In many regions, antiques have come way down in price due to the economy," says Serra. You might find a buffet or hutch for \$1,000

to \$2,500 less than what a cabinet-maker would charge.

8. Invest in top-of-the-line hinges and glides, and save on knobs and pulls. You need hardworking mechanical parts to stand the test of time, but almost any style of decorative hardware can be found at an affordable price. Spend \$4 for a home-center knob rather than \$15 for a designer one; multiply that outlay by the 40 knobs in a typical kitchen and save \$600. Get a designer touch by varying the material or finish on an island or between upper and lower cabinets.

9. Skip pro-style appliances. Today's mid-priced ranges offer plenty of power, convenience, and stainless-steel good looks for \$10,000 to \$20,000 less than their pro-style counterparts. Says Serra, "That's a lot of money you can invest elsewhere in the kitchen."

10. Paint kitchen walls before installing cabinets and backsplash tiles. That way you can simply roll the walls without having to cut in around the cabinets, saving time and protecting the new woodwork from brush marks. Even with touch-ups after the install is complete, this order of work speeds up the job, saving you \$200 or so in labor costs.

11. Add recessed lights over your kitchen island when pendants are being hung. Lighting pros recommend three levels of kitchen illumination: ambient (recessed or flush-mount), accent (hanging or pendant), and task (under-cabinet). If an electrician is already snaking in wires for pendant lights, consider adding wiring for recessed cans at the same time—and save yourself

the cost of a second service call, suggests San Francisco lighting designer Jody Pritchard.



12. Consider semigloss paint on walls in a back or basement stairwell used by kids. Yes, it's shiny, but it's also ultra-washable, prolonging the life of the paint job by several years. Invest in top-quality paint, and you'll save hundreds over the long haul.

—RICH MACEYUNAS, A PRO PAINTER AND WALLPAPERER IN WATERBURY, CONN.

13. Never call in pro help for a single small job.

Keep a running list of projects so that when you hire a plumber, electrician, or handyman, you can give him a group of tasks. Keeping him on the site longer may cost more up front, but you'll save the typical \$40 to \$80 minimum cost per visit each time he comes back.

—J.B. SASSANO, CEO OF MR. HANDYMAN, A SERVICE IN ANN ARBOR, MICH.



14. Use diagonal tiles as a focal point, not to cover an entire back-splash or floor. “Angling tiles has a huge impact on the installation cost,” says Bennett. With a diagonal design, every edge tile—around the perimeter of the installation, around obstacles, and against any inset or border tile—must be cut. That increases material costs by 20 percent and labor by about 200 percent.

Around the house

15. Save painted wood doors that have been cut down for carpet. It's easy enough to extend the bottom: Lay the door across two sawhorses; glue and screw a strip of MDF or the same wood to the bottom rail in the added thickness you need. Fill the joint with wood putty, sand flush, and paint. Depending on the door style, you could bank \$300 to \$800 for the cost of each replacement.

16. Cut lighting costs by opting for light-colored walls and floors. You'll get more mileage out of every lumen by bouncing around the available light and need 20 to 30 percent fewer light fixtures in a room.

17. Make less-expensive carpeting feel more luxe by upgrading the pad. Upgrade from a ¼-inch foam pad to a ½-inch one and save the

\$200 to \$500 price tag of a plusher carpet. “And unless you're installing a berber or other low-pile carpet, don't let a salesman talk you into a higher-density pad,” says flooring expert Matthew Glaser, of Louisville, Kentucky. “It creates a stiffer feel and will wear out the carpet more quickly.” In general, you should opt for a 6-pound pad instead of an 8-pounder.

18. Choose a fully enclosed insert if you're putting in a gas fireplace. These have glass fronts and door-like metalwork, and a fan and vents to send warm air into the house instead of up the chimney. Enclosed units put 85 to 99 percent of their heat into the living space, so you stay warm while burning less propane or natural gas than with inserts that have operable glass doors. You'll pay \$2,000 for a heat-producing insert, installed—an investment that pays for itself over time with lower heating bills.

19. Stick with pure-white ceilings and a single off-white trim color. You'll save \$200 to \$400 if you're paying a pro to paint multiple rooms, mostly in paint costs but also in labor for brush and roller cleanup.

20. Install occupancy-sensor switches where lights are frequently left on. Garages, basements, bathrooms, playrooms, and

kids' bedrooms are likely spots. These switches house a motion detector that recognizes when the room is empty and shuts off the lights automatically, then turns them on again when you enter. You can set a 1-minute delay for places you move through quickly or up to a 15-minute delay to limit nuisance shutoffs in living spaces. Each switch saves about \$25 a year in electricity; install a few, and by year two you could be saving hundreds.

21. Slash the cost of a new hardwood staircase. Convert carpeted stairs to hardwood or give worn, damaged treads and risers a fresh look by wrapping them with prefinished overlays, says Glaser. The glue-down overlays are made of solid hardwood and cap existing treads and risers (once any carpet has been removed); they come in three precut lengths, four hardwood species, and several finishes. You'll save 30 to 50 percent on the cost of replacing stair parts. One red-oak tread



22. Add wallpaper as an accent. Use it on just one wall of the living room, for example, or to wrap the chimney box, and save as much as \$500 in materials costs alone. —RICH MACEYUNAS, WATERBURY, CONN.

and primed-for-paint riser costs \$50 to \$70, depending on length; starecasing.com.

23. Reuse still-sturdy kitchen cabinets in a garage or closet instead of tossing them. Remove the doors, paint the boxes, and as long as they're modular cabinets—pre-made boxes that are unattached to each other and can stand alone—they're easy to relocate. You could save \$5,000 compared with buying new units to fill space with a 10-foot run of base and top cabinets.

24. If you're hiring a general contractor, get at least three bids—and let each GC know. The idea isn't necessarily to choose the lowest bidder—you want the one with a great reputation and portfolio and with whom you feel comfortable. But by creating competition, you ensure each offers the best possible price; you could save 5 percent or more.

25. Ask your contractor to pre-assemble casings if your project involves a lot of new windows and trim. “He can take the measurements of each window in advance, for a custom fit, and then cut the miters—leaving the legs a tad long to trim on location—and pocket-screw them together like picture frames,” says San Francisco builder Dan Condylis. “That saves him time and you money, and creates joints that look beautiful and will stay that way forever.”

26. Act as your own GC—or hire a construction manager. If you understand how a remodeling project works, you could save the 20 to 30 percent that contractors mark up their subcontractors' work on a project. You can also bring in a general contractor as a construction manager—essentially a consultant instead of the CEO of the job. Expect to pay him about 10 percent of the project cost; you'll get his

expertise while still saving 10 to 20 percent, says Rob Wennersten, a design-build contractor in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey.

27. In a house with 100-amp service, stick to Energy Star appliances and HVAC equipment. This can keep your energy bills in check and could prevent the need to upgrade to 200- or 300-amp service, a \$1,500-plus job.

28. Get whole-house smart controls without the \$5,000-plus tab for a hardwired system. Check out Lutron's new Caséta line, suggests Pritchard. Starting at \$500 to \$1,500, you can get a system that uses wall switches that retrofit into your existing boxes, and plug-in adapters for your lamps that work with numerous bulbs, including dimmable LEDs. Control your lighting, programmable thermostat, and even motorized window shades using dedicated remotes or an app installed on your smartphone or tablet (lutron.com).

On the outside

29. Concentrate color in a small area to help you landscape a big yard over time. Limit plant colors—and choices—for a big-impact display on a limited budget. Instead of using five daylilies in five different colors, for instance, plant one large group of the same color daylily to build volume and mass. “Using color to create one focal point can help distract the eye from unlandscaped areas,” says Scott Daigre, a garden designer in Ojai, California.

30. Choose native plants or non-natives that are adapted to your climate. These will require less water and fertilizer to thrive in your

area. You could save \$20 per plant over 10 years and, since they're more likely to survive drought and neglect, possibly replacement costs too.

31. Fill vertical space in your landscape—without paying for pricey trees—with hanging planters.

“Most plants that can live on the floor of a garden can be hung from a branch or a post,” says Daigre. Such vertical elements can create a sense of scale in the landscape for perhaps 10 percent of the cost of a tree.

32. Don't just fill the yard with flats of affordable plants. It's far better to have a plan, buy a few high-quality specimens at a time, and build a garden gradually than to try to save money by putting in lesser-priced plants all at once. Adds Daigre, “Negative space can be beautiful if nicely mulched.”

33. Save on outdoor lighting by spacing out pathway fixtures.

Place lights 8 feet apart rather than 5 feet. The idea is to lead the eye down the path, not create a runway, says David Diaz, a nurseryman in Lake View Terrace, California. Do this and you'll need one-third fewer fixtures, a savings of 30 percent.

35. Don't assume you have to rip out oversize plants. Assess whether they can be cut back hard to regenerate at a smaller and more manageable size, pruned into tree-like standards, or simply transplanted. Much of the cost of large plants stems from the years they take to mature; yanking rather than recycling is like throwing money in the trash.

36. Use stone or gravel for mulch. Rocks make a beautiful and cost-effective weed barrier that, unlike organic mulch, doesn't need annual refreshing. One cubic yard of medium-size pea gravel costs about \$55 and can last for up

to a decade; the same amount of organic mulch will set you back \$40 each year.

37. Get all the plants you need for a new landscaping project—the first time. You'll avoid special-order charges—and a shortfall—by calculating how many of each type of plant to buy before you head to the nursery. If you're unsure of quantities, bring along the dimensions of the space you're landscaping; the staff can figure out what you need. Nurseries often charge 20 percent or more for special orders—and that's if they can even get the additional stock.

38. Head to the back of the nursery to get a deal and bag a treasure. That's where you'll find the stragglers—plants too limited in quantity to warrant a prime place up front but usually in good condition. According to Diaz, savings here are typically at least 50 percent. ■

34. Plant small-size specimens.

Sure, investing in large plants can create an instant privacy screen, but if you landscape with a fast-growing variety and wait for plants to fill out, using smaller ones can save you \$10 to \$20 each.

—ROSS MASTROROCCHO,
A VETERAN LANDSCAPER
IN MONROE, CONN.



“A month of wasted labor flashed before my eyes”

The tattered 1920s house looked like a simple drywall-and-paint job—until it revealed some deep, dark secrets. But 18 months of scrapes, surprises, and delays later, this determined couple moved into their updated bungalow gem

It wasn't the most romantic activity for newlyweds, but there we were, sledgehammers in hand, taking down a wall in our new house. I pulled off a large chunk of the interior wall we'd started with, and Rachel and I peered up inside the hole. We looked at each other, then up again. We couldn't take our eyes off of what we saw.

Rachel, whose father is a carpenter, knew trouble when she saw it, but even I could tell something wasn't right. The ceiling joists weren't resting on top plates—they were just nailed to the tops of the walls' 2×4 framing. The only thing keeping that ceiling up was three layers of bead-board paneling and drywall inside and, we later learned, three layers of siding. We were lucky the ceiling hadn't fallen right on our heads.

As for how we got into this mess: Money was tight. I had gone out on my own as a filmmaker, and Rachel had left a job in New Orleans to come to Huntsville, Alabama, and marry me a couple of months earlier. We saw the 1920s bungalow in the Five Points Historic District near downtown Huntsville, and we loved it. Yeah, boy, it was run-down—and chopped up, with rooms added on as porches and later enclosed, and an odd ceiling drop from 10 feet to about 7 as you moved from the house's original front to its back. But we bought the house “as is” at a low price, thinking we'd Sheetrock the walls, put in a new kitchen, and be done. Well, I guess you could call it the house that love built, because we definitely had a lot more of that than we did hard construction experience.

One other thing we had a lot of? Problems. After we



BEFORE

EXTERIOR

Joel and Rachel Banta (RIGHT) transformed the sad facade of their 1920s house by centering the new door—built by Rachel's carpenter dad—and reinstating the original dormer. New, Craftsman-style piers replaced old metal railings.

Photographs by Jean Allsopp
Styling by Brian Carter



found out about the dangerous framing, we discovered termite damage, too. We had to face facts: Just making the place livable was going to take way longer than the four months we'd projected for the remodel. Restoring the house's historical character would be icing on the cake.

Rachel understood old houses better than I did because she'd grown up hearing her father, Paul Capitano, talk about his work restoring historical homes. He turned out to be our hero. During our renovation, he drove seven hours to Huntsville from his house in New Orleans once a month, spending a weekend teaching us what to do: everything from retrofitting the framing to laying floorboards and tile. When he left on Sunday, we'd try to do everything he'd said. I'm a film guy with a graphic-design background, and I'd never even held a nail gun. That would change, and fast!

We knew we wanted a three-bedroom, two-bath house—the same room count we started with, except we wanted to do away with two of the existing bedrooms and a bathroom to open up a large living room–kitchen area. Since the house is in a historic district, we could make only cosmetic changes, not additions, to the front, so to give us more living space we decided to add a master suite off the back. Rachel and I poured the concrete footings and laid the cinder-block foundations ourselves, under Paul's guidance. We also finished a room in the attic, making a total of 2,100 square feet of living space.

The glory of the new open-plan kitchen and living room would be the house's original long-leaf pine floors. But we'd need to refinish them, not to mention add a new subfloor, since we could see the bare ground peeking through gaps between some of the boards. I spent a month pulling up the floorboards, which required removing carpeting and then, piece by piece, a layer of glued-down linoleum. We took the floorboards to a floor restoration shop to have them shined up and to find some to match. The shop owner took a close look and said, "You can't use these. They have asbestos glue on them." Forget the potential dangers—a month of wasted labor flashed before my eyes. Even now, Rachel can barely talk about it, except to say, "That was a day for me. I cried."

We ended up replacing the wood with new

LIVING ROOM AND KITCHEN

The existing house was chopped up by numerous walls (BEFORE), which made it seem even smaller. The new, open first-floor layout merges the living room and kitchen to create a spacious feeling inside the bungalow. A vaulted ceiling allows natural light to stream in from the attic-level dormer.





LIBRARY

Bookshelves take advantage of the ceiling transition between the kitchen and living room; to access them, Joel added a rolling library ladder with platform for his heights-shy wife, Rachel. A hinged section of the bookcase serves as a secret secondary entrance to the finished attic office.



BEFORE

KITCHEN

Cabinets and drawers built by Rachel's dad are fitted with a mix of contemporary bar pulls and period-style bin pulls. The stainless-steel appliances and center worktables give the vintage home's kitchen an updated look. New southern yellow pine floors resemble the longleaf pine originals that Joel and Rachel reluctantly scrapped.

southern yellow pine, stained to look like the old longleaf we'd hoped for. And, aside from the floors, Rachel got her dream kitchen, a mix of historical and modern. The vintage-style cabinets are a real testament to her dad's abilities. He arrived one night with 28 sheets of birch plywood, and he and I spent three days making cabinet and drawer boxes. He made the doors in his shop at home, and on his next trip we installed everything. Rachel chose period-style bin pulls for the drawers and vertical bar pulls from IKEA for the cabinets. We had pushbutton switches installed, too, for a period touch.

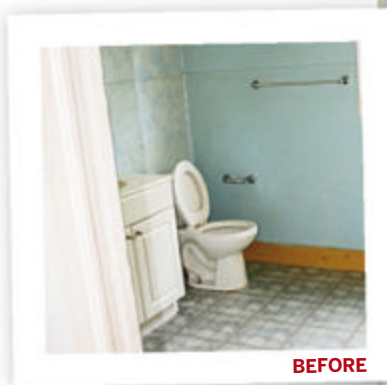
The kitchen is perfect, but the house's showpiece is the living room, where the plan evolved from a series of lightbulb moments. When we were clearing out the attic, we discovered the framing of an original dormer on the front of the house; we decided to give the living area a vaulted ceiling, peaking at about 18 feet, to show it off and open up the room even more. Since we had to put in a regular 10-foot ceiling in the kitchen to conceal electrical systems, there was a transition from a flat ceiling to a vaulted one. My father, who helped with everything from cutting asphalt shingles for the roof to painting the rooms, thought it would be a great spot for bookshelves—but 10 feet up in the air, how would we get to the books? We made pencil sketches and came up with a platform library staircase, like something you'd see in an old movie. I mail-ordered library-ladder hardware, and when Rachel's dad came we built it in four days. Done. Many of the other historical details, like interior transom windows, beadboard ceilings, and simple flat trim, were inspired by a local tearoom housed in a 1926 bungalow. Most of our home's trim had been removed over the years, so Rachel's time at the tearoom, taking notes and measurements, really paid off.

It's amazing that a few years ago, when we bought the house, I didn't know what a nail gun was. Now I have several of them, and a builder's license too. Renovating a house is a lot like making a film: Both involve many layers. Maybe Rachel and I will even do another house since we are now a family of three, having welcomed baby Elizabeth. If we do, one thing's for sure: I'll line up a crew to help me with the concrete and cinder blocks. ■



MASTER BEDROOM

Operable transoms over the doors are fitted with vintage hardware and funnel light and air into the new master bedroom, located in the rear addition.



BEFORE

MASTER BATH

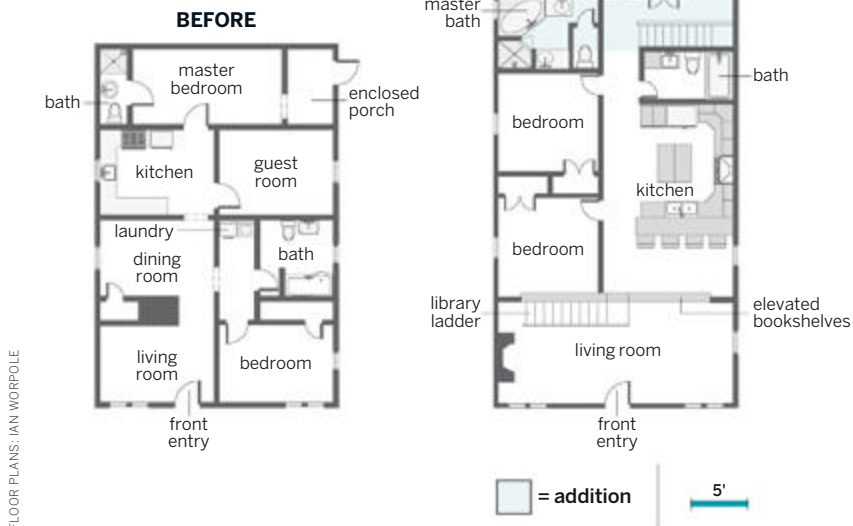
The old bath was dark and lacked storage (BEFORE). A windowed space in the addition makes for a light-filled master bath, with a glass-enclosed shower and large mirrors.





FLOOR PLANS

Doing away with two of the bedrooms allowed the couple to center the front entry and create one large open-plan living room and cook space. A 16-foot rear addition houses the new master suite.



SINK STATION

Light fixtures with glass shades, marble counters, and handmade footed vanity cabinets establish a vintage look. Period-perfect bin pulls and faucets complement the classic style.

NEW

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Ask

THIS OLD HOUSE

INSIDE
RHODODENDRONS/FLOOR SQUEAKS
/WOODPECKERS/VENT HOODS/KNOTWEED/MORE

47

tips, tricks, and
answers to
your home-
improvement
questions

Q Drips hitting the downspout elbow near my bedroom window are so loud that they wake me up! What can I do?

—ROGER BUTTERWICK, GILBERT, ARIZ.

A You could remove your downspout and install a rain chain, like the one shown here, in its place. These chains guide water to the ground, often through a series of cups that create a soothing sound as they slow the flow. This solution works best on houses with wide overhangs and slab-on-grade foundations, where splash-back and drainage are less of a concern. —THE EDITORS

PHOTOGRAPH
BY LEVI BROWN

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of veteran
experts*



TOM SILVA
General Contractor



NORM ABRAM
Master Carpenter



RICHARD TRETHEWEY
Plumbing and Heating
Expert



ROGER COOK
Landscape Contractor



KEVIN O'CONNOR
Host

My old rhododendron isn't producing as many blooms as it used to. Can anything be done to bring them back?

—TOM ROCHE, BAYPORT, N.Y.



Roger Cook tends to a rhododendron that is clearly thriving in its location.

ROGER COOK REPLIES: Rhodies lose vigor for lots of reasons. But it's not that difficult to perk them up if you give them these four things.

Enough sun. Rhodies need about half a day of sunlight to build up enough energy to bloom. Maybe yours is being shaded by trees that have grown and are now blocking the sun. If so, thin or limb up trees that are creating shade, or transplant the shrub to a sunnier location.

Good soil. If your rhododendron is staying put, test the soil. Rhodies thrive in organically rich, free-draining, slightly acidic soils with a pH from 4.5 to 6. If calcium is called for, add gypsum, because limestone raises soil pH. Add nutrients only in the amounts called for by the test. Too much fertilizer is a potential death sentence for these shrubs.

Root protection. Rhododendrons have shallow root systems, which makes them vulnerable to drought. Give them lots of extra water during long dry spells in the summer and fall. And to slow down evaporation, cover the roots with a layer of mulch 2 to 3 inches thick. I like using ground-up leaves because they break down quickly and enrich the soil.

Regular pruning. This stimulates branch growth and increases the opportunities for flower buds to form. Old rhodies like yours can benefit from a rejuvenation pruning:

Q Air for vent hoods

Our remodeled kitchen will include a 1,200-cubic-feet-per-minute (cfm) range hood. I know that hoods this size are required to have makeup air, but how should it be supplied?

—STEVEN CANSDALE, MOCKSVILLE, N.C.

RICHARD TRETHEWEY REPLIES: Yep, the International Residential Code (IRC) does stipulate that any vent hood exhausting more than 400 cfm should have a ducted system that feeds outside makeup air into the house at the same rate that inside air is removed. Makeup air keeps the air pressure inside and outside the house in balance. Without this system in place, air could instead be pulled in through the exhaust flues of a water heater, a heating system, or a chimney—delivering carbon monoxide and other unhealthy stuff with it.

The IRC also specifies that makeup air be controlled by a motorized damper system that automatically opens a flap inside a duct when the vent hood is running, then seals shut when the hood is turned off. Broan makes such a system; go to broan.com for a calculator that will tell you what size damper you'll need.

The damper sits inside a duct with one end that penetrates an outside wall. This inlet has to be at least 10 feet from any other exhaust outlets and covered with a screen to keep out pests. There are no hard-and-fast rules about where to locate the other end of the makeup air duct. Ideally,

What is it?

B Rafter-square holder
Clipped to a tool belt, the extruded aluminum Squaredock keeps a rafter square within easy reach without hogging valuable pouch space. \$20; squaredock.net



its outlet would be right beneath the vent hood so that the unconditioned outside air would be sent right back where it came from.

But if you don't want sticky summer (or frigid winter) air wafting over your cooktop, connect the inside end to the main return duct on your HVAC system, which will moderate the temperature and humidity of the incoming air. Another option is to lead the duct to an enclosed utility room where the mechanical systems are located. Either way, your furnace and AC units may end up working harder when you've got the exhaust hood on HIGH, but that's a small price to pay for the keeping the air pressure in proper balance.

Q How to bend shingles
We're having trouble replacing the shingles on our 1912 house where the lower edge of the wall flares out like a bell. The shingles either snap or won't bend enough. What's the trick to get them to follow the curve?

—JENNIFER ANDERSON, NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C.

TOM SILVA REPLIES: You'll need to "cook" your shingles to make the wood fibers more pliable. To do that, soak them in hot water—the hotter

the better—or suspend them above steaming water inside a covered container. After 15 to 30 minutes, put on some thick leather gloves and, as fast as you can, get the hot shingles to the wall and nail them in place. If you let them cool down, they'll be just as obstinate as uncooked shingles.

Q Knock out knotweed
My yard is being overtaken by Japanese knotweed. I've pulled up its roots, chopped it to the ground, and sprayed it with herbicide and it still comes back. Can it be stopped?

—BOB WILEY, LYNN, MASS.

ROGER COOK REPLIES: This stuff is the worst. Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) is highly invasive, smothers native vegetation with its dense foliage and thick rhizomes, and, in this country at least, has no natural predators to keep it under control. It's already established in the Northeast, Midwest, and Northwest and continues to spread. Hard to believe it was brought here deliberately in the late 1800s as an ornamental for hedges.

It is possible to knock out knotweed if you attack it in a smart and disciplined way. If the patch is small, with fewer than 50 stalks,

GOT TIPS?



If you have a clever solution that would impress the show guys, share it with us for a chance to appear in October's reader-created issue. To post ideas, scan this page with the Blippar app or go to thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH



Great stuff

Just in time for spring, our favorite new tools, materials, and other products to help you around the yard and garden. —THE EDITORS



Water saver

Edyn garden sensor

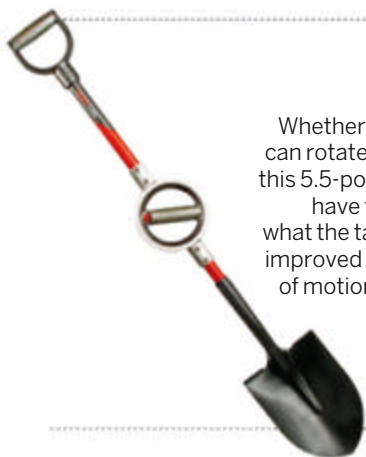
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Hand savers

Bionic rose-gardening gloves

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Back saver

Bosse ergonomic shovel

Whether you're a righty or a lefty, you can rotate the unique center handle on this 5.5-pound shovel so that you never have to cock your wrist, no matter what the task. That means less fatigue, improved posture, and a greater range of motion over a conventional shovel. \$69; bossetools.com

Bog saver

Magic Dirt certified-organic potting soil

As the sustainable by-product of cow-manure biodigesters that produce methane gas for fuel, this sterile fiber offers the same qualities as peat moss—with five times the nutrients—and no bogs are mined to get it. \$6 per cubic foot; magic-dirt.com



Space saver

Toro Recycler with SmartStow

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Gas saver

Echo 58V cordless chain saw

Because it's powered by a 58-volt lithium-ion battery, this saw starts easily with a button, not laboriously with a pull cord. And when its 16-inch bar knives into a tree trunk, you smell sawdust, not gas fumes. Fully charged, the 13.7-pound saw can make up to 32 cuts through 12-inch logs. \$299; echo-usa.com

and only a couple of years old, you might be able to dig it up in one go, as long as you remove and bag every piece of root or rhizome. Leave behind even a half-inch piece, and it can grow back.

But if you find that the roots go deeper than you care to dig—10 feet is the norm for established patches—try this less labor-intensive approach: In the spring, chop back the still-tender shoots with a string trimmer when they're 1 to 2 feet high. Collect every stalk—they can take root after being cut—bag them, and put them in the trash. In the late summer, when knotweed flowers, chop it back again with loppers a few inches above the ground, and immediately dab each cut stem with Roundup (glyphosate). This short-lived systemic herbicide migrates to the roots, but it's not likely to kill all of them the first time around. Again, bag all the plant debris



When Japanese knotweed flowers, as shown above, it's time to chop it down and dab systemic herbicide on the stubble.

and put it in the trash. Repeat the process for the next three years, by which time the plant will have used up the energy stored in its roots and rhizomes and will die.

However, if your thicket of knotweed is near water, you can't use Roundup; it's highly poisonous to fish and other aquatic creatures. But if you painstakingly cut down and collect all the stalks three or four times a year, the weed should eventually succumb...hopefully!

Q Foam in attic

Is it okay to spray foam in the ceiling of a gabled attic? Should the attic be vented, and if so, how do you do it?

—LARRY SITTER, ROLLA, N.DAK.

TOM SILVA REPLIES: Yes, it definitely is okay to spray foam against the underside of

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a roof, whether it's gabled or not. And because the attic will then be inside the envelope of the house, you'll almost certainly find that your home is more comfortable in the winter and summer and that you're spending less on heating and cooling. What's more, a roof insulated in this way doesn't have to be vented, according to the International Residential Code (IRC).

That said, there are some things you need to keep in mind when using foam in an attic in your climate zone.

This is not a DIY project. Even though they sell spray-foam kits to DIYers, attics are big, uncomfortable places to work in, and foam can be tricky to use. You'll be better off leaving this project to the pros.

Use closed-cell foam. Open-cell foam is permeable to moisture, which means there's a chance that during one of your notoriously cold winters, moisture vapor from

inside the house could condense inside the foam and lead to rotted roof sheathing. Closed-cell foam is impermeable to moisture. And because it's also fairly rigid, it will help strengthen your entire roof.

Find the dew point. Condensation can occur on the inside surface of closed-cell foam, too, if temps get cold enough and the humidity is sufficiently high. The best way to prevent this is to make the foam thick enough so that the calculated dew point—the temperature at which water vapor condenses—is *inside* the foam. Your contractor can make that calculation and determine the best thickness for your climate. Then, just to be safe, provide some heat in the attic, just as you would a room in your house. If you keep the space warmish, there's a better chance that the foam will stay dry.

Wait until the weather warms up. Spray foam doesn't adhere well to cold surfaces

or behave as predictably when it's applied in cold weather.

Protect it from fire. Once in place, spray-foam ceilings are required to have an ignition barrier to prevent them from degrading and off-gassing in a fire. For most foams, that ignition barrier is a continuous layer of drywall, but there are now foams with built-in fire-suppressing chemicals.

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Include a complete address and daytime phone number. Published questions will be edited for clarity and length and may be used in other media. We regret that, because of the volume of mail received, we're unable to reply to unpublished questions.



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PROJECT OF THE WEEK

HOW TO LAY A STONE-TILE FLOOR



Photo: Wendell T. Webber

Although many tilers still lay stone tile directly onto the subfloor, the tiles are likely to crack or pop loose unless you take two extra steps. First, stiffen the subfloor by gluing and screwing a second layer of $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch sheathing to the existing layer. Second, install an uncoupling membrane to isolate the rigid stone or ceramic from the subfloor's flexing joints and seasonal movements.

Once the membrane has been cemented in place, the tiling proceeds as usual. Be sure to use unmodified thinset; latex-modified thinset won't harden properly when sandwiched between the tile and the membrane.

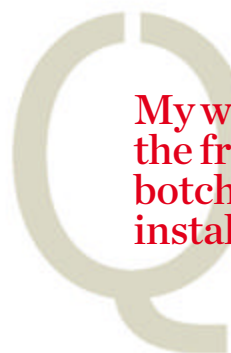
You'll find all the tools and supplies necessary for this—and any—home project at The Home Depot nearest you.

For step-by-step instructions, go to thisoldhouse.com/project

Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

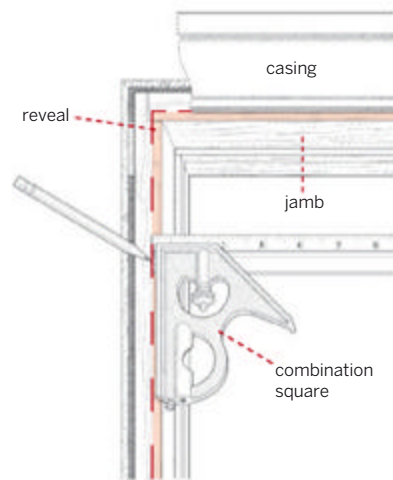


Norm's tricks of the trade



My wife and I managed to square up the front-door frame that the builder botched. Now, what's the best way to install the casing? —CHRIS COSTANZA, CINCINNATI

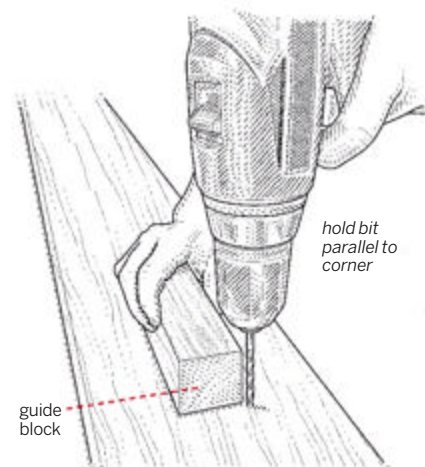
A The trick to installing casing is to always offset the trim's inner edge slightly from the jamb's inside face. This creates a small step, called a reveal, that adds visual interest and prevents the unsightly paint cracks that occur when a casing is flush with that face. To make a consistent reveal, set a combination square to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and mark the jamb edges, as shown. Then just line up each piece of casing with the marks and nail it to the edge of the jamb and to the rough framing under the drywall.



Q What's your secret for drilling perpendicular holes?

—CATHY GRAVES, WAXAHACHIE, TEXAS

A Here's a trick I use when I don't have a drill press or a jig: Place the drill bit where the hole will be, then take a scrap block with a crisp 90° end and place its corner close to the bit, as shown. Now align the bit with the corner; it will be perpendicular to the surface you're drilling. Remove the guide block once the hole is started, and concentrate on holding the bit at the same angle until you're done.



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COVER: See the listing for "The Cottage Out Back."

HOME SOLUTIONS (pp. 17–26) Termites, unearthed: *Thanks to* Innovative Pest Management, Columbia, MD; ipm4u.com. National Pest Management Association, Fairfax, VA; pestworld.org. Budget redo: **Homeowner's blog:** pinklittlenotebook.com.

BEFORE + AFTER KITCHEN: Vintage look, modern function (pp. 30–33) **Designer:** David Heide Design Studio, Minneapolis, MN; 612-337-5060; dhdstudio.com. **Contractor:** Next Level Renovation, Minneapolis, MN; 952-454-1853; nextlevelbuilders.com. **Cabinet design and custom lighting:** dhdstudio.com. **Cabinetmaker:** Alpine Woodworking, Blaine, MN; 763-784-0333; alpinewoodworking.com. **Floor tile:** rubbletile.com. **Sinks:** elkay.com. **Faucets:** rohlhome.com. **Wine fridge, range, wall oven, and microwave:** subzero-wolf.com. **Dishwasher:** askona.com.

BEFORE + AFTER BATH: Bathtime oasis (pp. 34–35) **Designer-builder:** CG&S Design-Build Home Remodeling, Austin, TX; 512-444-1580; cgsdb.com. **Paint:** 729 Jack Frost (walls) and 734 Tropical Teal (vanity); benjaminmoore.com. KM5056 Beach Glass (ceiling); kellymoore.com. **Windows:** marvin.com. **Vanity, cabinets, and window screens:** Amazonia Cabinetry, Austin, TX; 512-926-9160. **Vanity top:** caesarstone.com. **Faucets and shower fixtures:** deltafaucet.com. **Tub:** kohler.com. **Sinks and toilet:** mirabelle products.com. **Mirrors:** ventanaman.com. **Knobs:** emtek.com. **Bubble tile:** porcelanosa-usa.com. **Floor and wall tile:** daltile.com. **Towels and bath mat:** target.com.

PAINT IDEAS: Flaunt your woodwork (p. 37) **Designer:** Rafe Churchill, Sharon, CT; 860-364-2288; rafechurchill.com. **Paint:** 268 Charlotte's Locks; farrow-ball.com.

SHOPPING: Moravian star pendants (pp. 39–41) **See-through:** Clear Glass X-Large Star, Worlds Away; zincdoor.com. **Vintage patina:** Olivia pendant; potterybarn.com. **Pierced metal:** Medium Tin Moravian Star light in Antique finish; quintanaroo.com. **Pearly white:** One-light mini pendant in iridescent beige, Meyda Tiffany; wayfair.com. **Stained glass:** One-light mini pendant in multi, Meyda Tiffany; wayfair.com. **Amber glow:** Amber glass star in large; lafuenta.com. **Seeded style:** One-light brushed bronze instant pendant light conversion kit, Worth Home Products; homedepot.com. **Antique look:** Superior Moravian Star light in Bronze and champagne; shadesoflight.com. **Frosted glass:** Star Frosted Glass Small Chandelier, Worlds Away; zincdoor.com. **Gem tones:** Multicolored glass star in small; lafuenta.com.

GET THIS LOOK FOR LESS: Elegant farmhouse living room (pp. 42–43) **Designer:** P. Allen Smith; pallensmith.com. **Suzani-print chair:** Ann swivel rocker; grandinroad.com. **Blue throw:** Bedford Cottage Rio Acrylic Throw; wayfair.com. **Crimson cachepot:** Houston International 8135E XR 7-Inch Steel Planter in red; amazon.com. **Pine mirror:** Reclaimed wood oval mirror; shop.pallensmith.com. **Egg basket:** Wire Egg Basket; enasco.com. **Zinc-topped coffee table:** Zinc Top Bridge Coffee Table; overstock.com. **Throw pillows:** Gurli Cushion Cover; ikea.com.

TOH TV: Bridging the gap (pp. 44–45) **Architect:** Bill Hubner, Incite Architecture, Lexington, MA; incitearchitecture.com. **Architectural color consultant:** Bonnie Krims Color Studio; 508-751-1141; bonniekrims.com. **Landscape designer:** Timothy Lee Landscape Design, Lexington, MA; 781-862-8889; tlla.net. **Paint:** 2134-60 Whitestone (walls), OC-37 Glacier White (trim) and 2135-20 Stonecutter (door, shutters, and lattice); benjaminmoore.com. **Columns:** turncraft.com. **Garage doors:** Eastman

Estate Carriage Doors; garaga.com. **PVC trimboard:** Kleer; thetapcogroup.com.

LANDSCAPING: Little trees, big rewards (pp. 47–49) *Thanks to* Ed Laivo, Four Winds Growers; fourwindsgrowers.com. **For more information:** *Grow a Little Fruit Tree*, by Ann Ralph, Storey Publishing; littlefruittree.com.

PHOTOSHOP REDO: Bland, begone (p. 51) *Thanks to* Matthew Evans, Arcanum Architecture, Cincinnati, OH; arcanumarchitects.com. **Window:** pella.com. **House numbers:** 5-inch Tumbled Copper Arts and Crafts House Numbers with Living Finish; houseofantiquehardware.com. **Sconce:** Portfolio Amberset Specialty Bronze Outdoor Wall Light; lowes.com. **Column:** Poly-Classic Craftsman Series; turncraft.com.

THE COTTAGE OUT BACK (pp. 60–65) **Architect:** Kuhn Riddle Architects, Amherst, MA; 413-259-1630; kuhnrmiddle.com. **General contractor (built-ins and balcony):** Tom Hague III Building & Remodeling, Brewster, MA; 508-240-1143; haguermodeling.com.



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Interior and some exterior design: Elisha Beaman House, Amherst, MA; 413-253-3854. **Windows and doors:** marvin.com. **Screen doors:** vintagewoodworks.com. **Exterior stain:** maibec.com. **Paint:** BM 699 Garden Oasis (outside trim and windowboxes), HC89 Northampton Putty (living room and kitchen walls), HC 112 Tate Olive (living room trim and staircase balusters), BM 2138-30 Mohegan Sage (living room floor and stair treads), HC 124 Caldwell Green (kitchen cabinetry and bathroom beadboard and trim), HC-96 Richmond Gray (bathroom walls), BM2138-50 Misted Green (bedroom walls), BM2138-40 Carolina Gull (bedroom trim and beams), BM 1574 Rushing River (bedroom floor), and BM 2138-60 Gray Cashmere (bedroom beadboard); benjaminmoore.com.

DESIGNED TO DELIGHT (pp. 66–73) **Landscape designer:** Wesley Rouse, Pine Meadow Gardens, Southbury, CT; 203-264-6066.

HOW THE PROS CUT COSTS (NOT CORNERS) (pp. 74–79)
Thanks to Dean Bennett, Dean Bennett Design and Construction, Castle Rock, CO; 303-513-2065; deanbennettcd.com. Dan Condyllis, Period Restoration Inc., San Francisco, CA; 510-717-7248; periodrestorationinc.com. Scott Daigre, Powerplant Garden Design, Ojai, CA; 323-363-0844; tomatomania.com. David Diaz, Bountiful Gardens, Lake View Terrace, CA; 818-389-3864; bountifulgardens.info. Matthew Glaser, The Floor Store, Louisville, KY; 502-634-9632; floorstorekylouisville.com. Richard Maceyunas, Richard Maceyunas Painting, Wallpapering & Home Repairs, Waterbury, CT; 203-755-2084. Ross Mastrocroco, Enviro Designs Landscaping, Monroe, CT; 203-650-5271; envirodesignsllc.com. Jody Pritchard, PritchardPeck Lighting, San Francisco, CA; 415-323-5540; pritchardpeck.com. Karen Richmond, Neil Kelly Company, Portland, OR; 866-691-2719; neilkelly.com. J.B. Sassano, Mr. Handyman, Ann Arbor, MI; 877-674-2639; mrhandyman.com. Susan Serra, Susan Serra Associates; susanserraassociates.com. Rob Wennersten, Wennersten Design + Construction, Woodcliff Lake, NJ; 201-802-0644; wennerstendesign.squarespace.com.

READER REMODEL: "A month of wasted labor flashed before my eyes" (pp. 80–85) **Kitchen:** **Fridge and cabinet bar pulls:** ikea.com. **Bin pulls:** hickoryhardware.com. **Range:** fratellionofri.cz. **Islands:** equippers.com. **Faucet:** kraususa.com. **Master bath:** **Faucet:** deltafaucet.com.

ASK THIS OLD HOUSE (pp. 87–94) **Q + A:** Woodpeckers gone wild: *Thanks to* Paul Curtis, Associate Professor and Wildlife Extension Specialist, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; dnr.cals.cornell.edu. **Air for vent hoods:** *Thanks to* Brian Wellnitz, Marketing Manager, Kitchen Ventilation, Broan-Nutone, Hartford, WI; broan-nutone.com.

SAVE THIS OLD HOUSE (p. 104) *Thanks to* Greg Miller, Northeast Realty, Afton, NY; northeastrealty.net. 🏠

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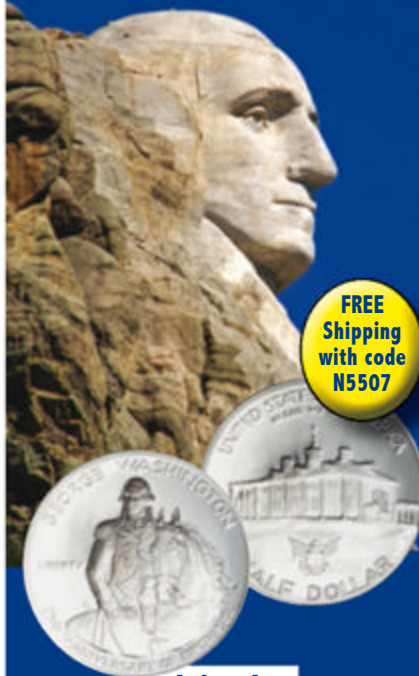


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LIMIT 5 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 7/6/15. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON!

16 OZ. HAMMERS WITH FIBERGLASS HANDLE

PITTSBURGH CLAW RIP

LOT NO. 47872/69006/60715/60714

Item 47872 shown

SAVE 62%

\$2.99

REG. PRICE \$7.99

YOUR CHOICE!

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SUPER COUPON!

2 HP INDUSTRIAL 5 MICRON DUST COLLECTOR

LOT NO. 97869/61790

SAVE \$90

\$159.99

REG. PRICE \$249.99

Item 97869 shown

• 70 Gallon Capacity

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SUPER COUPON!

WINDSOR DESIGN 60", 4 DRAWER HARDWOOD WORKBENCH

LOT NO. 93454/69054

SAVE \$110

\$139.99

REG. PRICE \$249.99

Item 93454 shown

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SUPER COUPON!

2.5 HP, 21 GALLON 125 PSI VERTICAL AIR COMPRESSOR

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC

LOT NO. 67847/61454/61693

Item 67847 shown

SAVE \$70

\$149.99

REG. PRICE \$219.99

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SUPER COUPON!

1/4" TRIM ROUTER drillmaster

LOT NO. 44914/61626

SAVE 42%

\$19.99

REG. PRICE \$34.99

Item 44914 shown

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SUPER COUPON!

10" SLIDING COMPOUND MITER SAW

CHICAGO ELECTRIC

LOT NO. 98199/61307/61971/61972

Item 98199 shown

SAVE \$115

\$84.99

REG. PRICE \$199.99

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SUPER COUPON!

72" x 80" MOVER'S BLANKET

LOT NO. 66537/69505/62418

Item 66537 shown

SAVE 66%

\$5.99

REG. PRICE \$17.99

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SUPER COUPON!

900 PEAK/700 RUNNING WATTS 2 HP (63 CC) 2 CYCLE GAS RECREATIONAL GENERATOR

LOT NO. 69381/60338/62472/66619

Item 69381 shown

SAVE \$80

\$99.99

REG. PRICE \$179.99

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SUPER COUPON!

90 AMP FLUX WIRE WELDER

• No Gas Required

LOT NO. 68887/61849

Item 68887 shown

WE CARRY A FULL LINE OF WELDING WIRE

SAVE \$50

\$99.99

REG. PRICE \$149.99

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SUPER COUPON!

PITTSBURGH RAPID PUMP® 3 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK

LOT NO. 68048/69227/62116

Item 68048 shown

SAVE \$85

\$74.99

REG. PRICE \$159.99

• Weighs 74 lbs.

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2.5 HP, 10" TILE/BRICK SAW
LOT NO. 69275/62391
\$214.99
REG. PRICE \$399.99
SAVE \$185

Item 69275 shown

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29 PIECE TITANIUM NITRIDE COATED HIGH SPEED STEEL DRILL BIT SET
LOT NO. 5889/61637/62281
\$9.99
REG. PRICE \$24.99
SAVE 60%

Item 61637 shown

LIMIT 7 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 7/6/15. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

4" x 36" BELT/6" DISC SANDER
LOT NO. 97181/62502
\$59.99
REG. PRICE \$139.99
SAVE \$80

Item 97181 shown

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MOVER'S DOLLY
LOT NO. 93888/60497/61899/62399
\$8.99
REG. PRICE \$14.99
SAVE 40%

Item 93888 shown

LIMIT 9 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 7/6/15. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

44", 13 DRAWER INDUSTRIAL QUALITY ROLLER CABINET
LOT NO. 68784/69387/62270
\$359.99
REG. PRICE \$699.99
SAVE \$340

Item 68784 shown

LIMIT 5 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 7/6/15. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

12" RATCHET BAR CLAMP/SPREADER
LOT NO. 46807/68975/69221/69222/62123
\$1.99
REG. PRICE \$5.99
SAVE 66%

Item 69222 shown

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1500 WATT DUAL TEMPERATURE HEAT GUN (572°/1112°)
LOT NO. 96289/62340/62546
\$8.99
REG. PRICE \$29.99
SAVE 70%

Item 96289 shown

LIMIT 6 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 7/6/15. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

CENTECH AUTOMATIC BATTERY FLOAT CHARGER
LOT NO. 42292/69594/69555
\$5.99
REG. PRICE \$19.99
SAVE 70%

Item 42292 shown

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17 FT. TYPE 1A MULTI-TASK LADDER
LOT NO. 67646/62514
\$117.99
REG. PRICE \$199.99
SAVE \$82

Item 67646 shown

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10", 12 SPEED BENCH MOUNT DRILL PRESS
LOT NO. 60237/44836/62408
\$99.99
REG. PRICE \$199.99
SAVE \$100

Item 60237 shown

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12,000 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH REMOTE CONTROL AND AUTOMATIC BRAKE
LOT NO. 68142/61256/60813/61889
\$299.99
REG. PRICE \$599.99
SAVE \$300

Item 68142 shown

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RECIPROCATING SAW WITH ROTATING HANDLE
LOT NO. 65570/61884/62370
\$21.99
REG. PRICE \$54.99
SAVE 60%

Item 65570 shown

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9" x 72" 2 PIECE STEEL LOADING RAMPS
LOT NO. 44649/69591/69646
\$44.99
REG. PRICE \$99.99
SAVE \$55

Item 44649 shown

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MECHANIC'S GLOVES
MEDIUM LOT NO. 61235
LARGE LOT NO. 93640/60447
X-LARGE LOT NO. 93641/60448
\$3.99
REG. PRICE \$9.99
SAVE 60%

Item 93640 shown

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RETRACTABLE AIR HOSE REEL WITH 3/8" x 50 FT. HOSE
LOT NO. 93897/69265/62344
\$59.99
REG. PRICE \$149.99
SAVE \$90

Item 93897 shown

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18 GAUGE BRAD NAILER
LOT NO. 68021/62255
\$13.99
REG. PRICE \$34.99
SAVE 60%

Item 68021 shown

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PACIFIC HYDROSTAR 1500 PSI PRESSURE WASHER
LOT NO. 68333/69488
\$79.99
REG. PRICE \$129.99
SAVE \$50

Item 68333 shown

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EIGHT DRAWER WOOD TOOL CHEST
LOT NO. 94538
\$69.99
REG. PRICE \$99.99
SAVE \$30

Item 94538 shown

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SAVE THIS OLD HOUSE

Gothic Revival with a charming facade!

PRICE \$16,500

LOCATION Oxford, New York

CONTACT Greg Miller, 607-226-0128

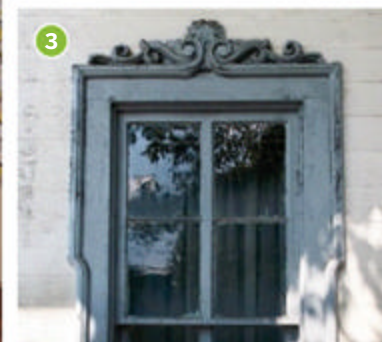
THE HISTORY When mill owner Clark Lewis built this house, around 1850, it was a modestly adorned Greek Revival. In the years that followed, business boomed, and he bought up the grist, lumber, and plaster mills in town and used his newfound wealth to transform his simple house with an eccentric Gothic Revival facade. Business declined after the Civil War, and eventually he sold the house to a distant relative. The home traded hands and was at one point converted to a boarding house. It has been vacant for about 10 years.

WHY SAVE IT? The Gothic Revival exterior has extensive detailing, including elaborate vergeboards, drip molds over the windows and doors, and carved porch posts. The interior retains the 1850s millwork and heart-pine floorboards, as well as stair scrolls and a single windowed bay added later.

WHAT IT NEEDS The 2,500-square-foot house sits on a sturdy stone foundation but needs considerable work, including new wiring, updated plumbing, and repairs to the heating system. Large portions of the plaster walls have been damaged and need to be restored or replaced. Tax credits of up to 40 percent might help keep the costs down. Oxford is a charming town of 3,900 nestled between Oneonta and Binghamton. Whoever restores the house will be in good company, as the area has seen a recent uptick in the restoration of some of its historic properties, including an elegant Greek Revival house next door. —PAUL HOPE



1] The five-bedroom, five-bath house is on a tree-lined avenue near Main Street. **2]** A false gable was added as part of the 1870s renovation. It is extensively embellished with decorative vergeboards and includes a central lancet window. **3]** All the windows facing the street are decorated with carved drip molds. **4]** The interior retains its casings, heart-pine floors, and a handful of the original 12-over-12 windows.



**\$2,000
BUYER'S
AWARD**

Zillow, the real-estate marketplace, wants to see this home restored. As a Proud Preservation Partner of Save This Old House, Zillow is offering a \$2,000 award to the buyer of this diamond in the rough. Contact toh_marketing@timeinc.com for details. And to explore more homes for sale, visit zillow.com. Offer expires 4/30/2016.

PHOTOS: GREG MILLER

You can't predict what they'll
get into out there, but you can in here.

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